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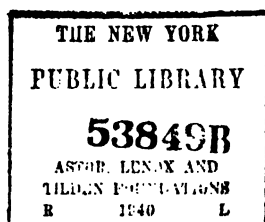
I CAME IN SIGHT OF THE LAST MILESTONE—Page 34.

Person of Quality

BY ASHLEY DUFFLES



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. AN OLD FAMILY AND A YOUNG FOOL . . .	3
II. THE TOP OF A COACH	12
III. I MAKE A NEW ACQUAINTANCE	26
IV. TRIVIALITIES OF THE NORTH ROAD	34
V. OFFICERS AND GENTLEMEN	41
VI. A FRIEND AT A PINCH	62
VII. "NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSIT"	72
VIII. I GIVE MY PROOFS	78
IX. I CEASE FROM BEING A MASTER	83
X. — AND BECOME A MAN	93
XI. I COME UNDER CONVICTION OF SIN	98
XII. VISITORS AND RESIDENTS	104
XIII. ON THE BAITING OF BULLS AND METHO- DISTS	112
XIV. I AM TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL	122
XV. THE FALL OF AN IDOL	128
XVI. I FORGET GOD	138
XVII. MURDER AT MIDNIGHT	143
XVIII. THE IRISH	149
XIX. WHITE MAGIC	157
XX. GOD REMEMBERS ME	161
XXI. MY SECOND HOME	172
XXII. I BECOME A JOURNEYMAN MILLER	180
XXIII. ABEL	184
XXIV. THE MASTER STAG	190
XXV. MORE OF MY FRIEND ABEL	199
XXVI. THE CHURCH TO THE RESCUE	207

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXVII. THE LIFTING OF THE CLOUD . . .	221
XXVIII. AN ADVENTURE AND NEWS . . .	228
XXIX. ON MY HOME-COMING . . .	236
XXX. I COME INTO MY INHERITANCE . . .	244
XXXI. DINNER FOR TWO AND — DESSERT . . .	258
XXXII. THE MARQUISE WILLS IT . . .	289
XXXIII. A COMEDY OF ERRORS . . .	296
XXXIV. THE MESSENGER . . .	309
XXXV. THE MESSAGE . . .	324
XXXVI. AT THE "CATHARINE WHEEL" . . .	348
XXXVII. WHAT LAY UNDER THE SHEET . . .	355
XXXVIII. THE CUP RUNS OVER . . .	372
XXXIX. WHOLLY UNIMPORTANT . . .	395
XL. I ENCOUNTER A KNIGHT-ERRANT . . .	399
XLI. JUST A WOMAN . . .	427

A Person of Quality

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER ONE

AN OLD FAMILY AND A YOUNG FOOL

I WAS born upon the first day of April, in the year of our Lord 1777, at Bramford Hall, my father's country seat, some four miles from Ipswich.

The house is pleasantly situate, the timber, both oak and elm, growing large there; the country well-wooded, well-tilled, and served by narrow deep lanes descending to the highways, as well as by the New Navigation of the river Gipping going soberly from weir to weir between its willows, bordered by water meadows and rough pastures set with little spinneys, cars and reed-beds, where one was sure of duck and snipe after frost, and of water-hen all the year round. On these greens we would get black geese in hard weather, but they were none so easy to come at. It was indeed an excellent sporting estate, full of partridge of the old sort, for the red-leg, or French bird, had not then won the mastery and become the pest he is to-day. It was beside as well stocked with hares as any manor in Suffolk, and is so still.

As for the Hall, you know the place, and I need not to describe it. It has altered not a whit since my childhood either outwardly or in its furnishing. My father, the fifth earl, disliking the place, or preferring his house in Clarges Street, seldom saw it when Parliament was sitting and made no additions. My

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

We had started betimes upon an early breakfast. There were few to bid me God-speed. A keeper or two with my cockers whining in leash, and a groom or so, would be there behind my lord. He, as I remember, put the pistol-case in the boot and the pistols one in either side-pocket of my riding-coat. Screw-barrelled they were, and he had charged them himself the previous afternoon, and refitted the flints after marking the deuce of clubs at ten paces in the stable yard, and pronouncing them serviceable weapons. "Now, mind what I say, George," said he at parting, "and 'tis my last word: be quick with your first barrel but slow with your second."

My poor father! I thought of him as of an old man then; yet here I sit, pen in hand without glasses, at nearly twice the age at which he died. How little we knew of one another! May God grant us opportunity somehow and somewhere to make better acquaintance. Amen!

And my mother was there; ah, yes; and what would I not give to-day to have a clear memory of her parting word and gesture; but what with the freshness of the horses, the bustle, and a foolish kind of false mirth and rollicking off-to-school-again feeling which befogged the business, I cannot recall aught she said, where she stood, nor how she looked.

At the narrowest of the road near Blakenham *Checquers* my mother's old coachman drew wide. A lady was approaching, mounted, followed by a lad riding upon a woman's saddle, from which I judged that mademoiselle was testing her new purchases turn about. Staying us with a gesture, she drew rein beside us, and was about to accost me when the animal she rode, a fine young iron-grey blood horse with a white fetlock, broke into an angry squeal, rose upon his hind feet, and, having thus stolen a handful of rein, arched his back like a cat's and sprang clear off the ground. Worse still, he swung his quarters as he rose and alighted sidelong stiffly upon all four feet. Scarce had

CHAPTER ONE

he touched ground ere he was up again, and yet again, and again, his tail lashing, his ears laid, discharging kicks like the blows of a fighting man, sudden and dangerous. Now he had bucked himself off the road into the ditch, now he was out again, up and down, round and round, exhausting every artifice of vice to unseat his rider.

The lady meanwhile, curtly forbidding me to alight, made a brave fight for it. Her horse had gotten his head down, and only a strong and dexterous man could have got it up again; she must, perforce, let him have his play out, but was minded to keep her seat, and so to improve the occasion that the rogue should remember it. How she leaned back, letting the sudden impulses of those powerful loins spend themselves in vain upon the light, elastic tenacity of her body! Her hands were incessantly at work upon his mouth, and each caper was visited with a ringing cut of the whalebone.

"Sakes alive! Master George, did ye ever see the like? An' to think that was me as taught her all that!" gasped my companion in radiant admiration.

In two minutes the rebellion was beaten down, the rascal forced into the ditch with his nose in a holly and soundly punished. "Isn't he a fine beauty, Mister George?" said my lady, a little breathlessly, bringing him back to us at a penitential pace. I had alighted and was moving to meet her.

"Yes. I shall call him *Fox* and his *camerade* there, *Pitt*; this is the handsomer and the naughtier; the Opposition, as milord your father would say, *n'est ce pas?*"

"My father will be reproaching himself for buying the brute for you, mademoiselle — marquise, I should say. You frightened me, who have seen you ride before this. . . . You must have risen early."

"Oh, la, la! But about yourself, Mister George," she leaned over her pommel, slackening the curb and caressing back into

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWO

THE TOP OF A COACH

THE following morning, having taken my leave of old James, whose honest brown face at the moment of parting was clouded with concern for his young master, I took the stage for Huntingdon.

I had booked me a box-seat over night the better to see the country, and mounted in company with two other outsides. One was a ponderous person of the grazier class bundled to the eyes in horse-cloths like a winter-bedded hedgehog in oak leaves. He hawked and spat for some minutes at our starting and was ready with any encouragement or none to have given us a strict account of his complaint. "That do fare to sim like this here wi' me" (says he) "when the wind and the water comes between the bone and the flesh they gits the better o' me."

The coachman, an elderly man of the most civil address, courteously ignored the fellow's wheezings, preferring the conversation of the fare upon the seat behind him, a smallish lightly-built man, apparently but little older than myself, whose keen, self-contained, dark face was closely framed by the peak and ear-lappets of a travelling-cap.

Their talk was horse—a jargon of flash terms, sires, ages, weights and odds, eked out with nods and winks and guarded whispers.

CHAPTER TWO

On the skirts of Newmarket Heath, as I remember, we passed within a hundred yards of a fine new gibbet built to accommodate three malefactors, but supporting but two carcasses 'at present,' as the valetudinarian put it, adding rather dryly, "That there 'tyke' hev giv um the slip seem'n'ly, an' they can't sim to lay hands on 'um nohow!"

"And won't, in my opinion, yet awhile," observed the younger man, composedly surveying the gallows over his shoulder as the coach left it behind.

Nobody spoke for a time, the scene providing us with reflections. I heard the guards hift the blunderbuss in the wicker tray before him, and was fingering my pistols when the passage across the desolate white road a furlong ahead of us of a covey of very large birds changed the colour of my thoughts. Covering the ground between running and flying, the things fledted across the brown heath, shewing much white in the wing.

"Harnsers,"¹ grunted the fat man from the depths of his comforter.

"Bustards," curtly corrected the younger fare.

The Ox, as I secretly named him, who was of the breed that resents the slightest opposition, rolled in his seat.

"Them's *barnsers*, I tell ye," he squeaked in an irritated falsetto, "that sim yewve niver sin noo harnsers wheear yew come from."

"Plenty — and bustards too — on the wolds," replied the other, and stopt.

The coachman blew out purple cheeks, rapped an oath, and drew his lash across the leaders, which were going well. "Look-ee there," said he, "this here gap we be a-comin' tew is where the road cuts the Devil's Dyke; there away on yer right be Ely tower, ten mile off across the fen."

¹*Harn-shaws — Harons. Ede.*

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

We changed horses at Cambridge. I remember nothing else about the place.

It was when we were nearing the end of the next stage, I cannot recall which, for the country along the Roman road is featureless and hard to bear in mind, we overtook a broad-backed man jogging sedately along the grass margin of the turnpike upon a short-legged roan cob which gained at once the commendation of our driver.

"There's hough-action for ye!" he cried. "Do but see how he picks up his feet! Norfolk that for a crown. Marshland or Shales, damme if I knows which: both is good blood. . . . *Mornin'! Mr. Doggett!*" he bawled, as we drew level.

"*Mornin' t'yel*" came back to us, muted by the rumble of the wheels. The rider lifted a hard, red, preoccupied face, which, upon the instant, took on a peering glance of enquiry and passed into the distortion of anger.

"Aha! I see ye, ye b — Northcountry coper, you! Yes, *yew* as is sticking up yar collar!" with more and worse.

The smaller outside had muttered a word about the coldness of the wind at the moment the coachman hailed, and was now sitting with his head bent and his hands to his ears.

But the rider had seen him, and shaking up his cob, a rare stepper, hung, as you may say, to our near forewheel, brandishing his ground-ash and bawling injurious expressions, charges of trickery and bad faith, until the insides drew up their glasses, and a lady began to scream.

"Here! doo yew be quiet and hould yar noise, Mr. Doggett," cried the guard, "or some o' my fares'll be mistakin' ye for what yew ain't. Shet that gret wahpus o' yourn, will ye? or I'll not answer for any man's pistols but my own!"

If our fellow passenger had cherished a thought of concealment or disguise he had plainly dismissed it, and was loosening the buttons of his brown box-cloth overcoat with an air of un-

CHAPTER TWO

concern, yet, it seemed to me, that over a smiling lip the eyes had grown hard and old.

"Pull up, Jack, I'll settle with him here," said he, in the coachman's ear, giving him a look of mute reproach.

"There! damme, I'm sorry; wholly forgot! But, stop *here?* couldn't nohow, Mr. Sam. But, lookye, here's the change in sight, and he's off ahead to await ye. I'll give ye ten minutes."

"Ten?" replied the youth, for he was little more, with quiet scorn, and disengaging his feet from the straw he drew off his gloves.

The change-house we were approaching was just an inn with ample stabling, the whole newly-built for its purpose, no village happening to stand suitably for this end of the stage. (And now I think on't it was the *Barn Inn*.)

The rider had hitched his cob to a post, and stood ready and dancing with impatience as we came to a stand. Too ready, indeed, for he saluted the youth with a sounding thwack of the ground-ash before he reached the ground, and gripping the collar of his overcoat was for thrashing him soundly and out of hand, undeterred by a general cry for fair play.

The man was tall and big and athletic, with rocky, scarred face, and wide-lipped mouth, underhung like a bull-dog's. My sympathy was engaged for the smaller fellow caught thus at a disadvantage, but, surely seldom has man needed compassion less. Standing perfectly still he essayed to speak, but failing to mitigate his accuser's vehemence, and receiving a second blow, shook his shoulders and slipped out of his two coats with the lissomeness of an eel, and dexterously ducking a stroke aimed at his head, butted his tall assailant sharply below the chest, caught him by the hips as he staggered, locked his heels, and flung him heavily.

The outcry of astonishment and pleasure which arose from the roof and window of the coach, as well as from the momen-

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

tarily increasing throng of stablemen, fell to silence as the fallen man got to his feet, his face no longer red but mottled and furrowed with extreme emotion.

"That's yar game, is it? Yew 'oon't take yar lickin', 'oon't ye? Want to *fight*, dew ye? Aha! Well now, yew've brought it on yarself, mind! I call all on ye to witness he've brought it on hisself!"

He, too, was out of his coats in a trice, and seizing the lappets of his sleeved waistcoat tore the garment open with such force that a shower of brass buttons flew amidst the crowd.

Upon his side, the youth was stripping to his shirt and smalls, and presently rolling up his left sleeve bared a finely modelled forearm, which he as instantly reclothed, hiding a design in blue, worked with gunpowder as sailors use, a foul anchor between two hearts and some initials, as it seemed to me. These preparations he made with an almost punctilious deliberation, calling for a chair whereon to place his clothing, and even folding his coats.

His antagonist watched these finical arrangements with brutal impatience, stroking the naked brawn of his great arms, stamping up and down the while, scowling and cursing; yet, when the youngster had finished his toilet and put himself on guard (so daunting is complete composure in an unknown adversary), the aggressor's impetuosity had noticeably cooled.

"At your service, Mr. Doggett," said the youth, blowing upon his nail.

"Fall tew! fall tew, gentlemen!" cried the coachman from his box, "here's three minutes gone out of yar ten!"

"Seven will be more than enough, Jack," drawled the younger man imperturbably, and on the last syllable flashed in and out again, planting two smacking body-blows and ducking a short swinging return.

From that moment it was a foregone conclusion as anyone

CHAPTER TWO

could see. The more active fighter did what he chose with his man, who seemed to be something of a local champion and had a dozen knees at his service at the end of the round. Nor did the young stranger lack this homely form of sympathy; from three or four proffers he made choice of a gaunt, hatchet-faced gypsy, with black curls and cat-skin cap, silver ear-rings and scarlet kerchief knotted around a yellow throat.

Now my bottle-holders at Eton had always bid me spare my breath and let them do what talking was needed, so that I wondered the more at the young fellow conversing with his ruffianly-looking second in low rapid tones, such words as I caught (for I stood close) being tinkler's patter and wholly unintelligible. The gypsy said nothing, but nodded repeatedly.

The insides had begun betting, but presently were all of the same mind. The interest of the ring was too intense for shouting; one heard the boot-heels of the combatants crunch the gravel, their hard breathing and the "*wback . . . wback*" of the blows.

"Stand up to 'im, neighbour Doggett; stand *up* to 'im, bor, an' kip yar eyes about ye. Lord! he hops round ye like a cooper round a cask!" was the ambiguous encouragement squeaked by our over-wrapped fellow traveller.

But the big fellow was plainly helpless; twice his blind rushes landed him upon his hands and knees, the youth slipping from under him and felling him as he passed. If he stood on guard he was out-boxed and pummelled without a chance of getting anything for his money.

It was a ludicrous scene, and soon over. The maladroit bully, finding neither pleasure nor profit was to be gained by persistence, collapsed sitting amidst uproarious merriment, and refused to rise.

Whether the contest would have been renewed must remain an open question. The man was more blown than hurt, and did

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

not want for encouragement. Two of the insides who had put their money upon him were reviling him for his white liver and bawling for brandy to put heart into him. But at this juncture there stepped into the ring a middle-aged man of sedate carriage, wearing a plain three-cornered hat without band or lace, soberly habited in a horseman's coat of drab frieze, which fell to his brown tops. He had but just alighted from a gig, and from the small hair-trunk he carried I judged that he intended to travel with us.

But he had business upon his hands first. Surveying the combatants with an air of grave, kindly concern, he addressed himself to the discomfited sitter. "Friend Doggett, I am grieved to see thee in this plight. Thou hast plainly made a mistake. Come, my friend, thou hast had enough of this folly; be advised by me, who, thou knowest, have only thine own interest at heart, and let the matter rest where it is."

At this there was derisive laughter and some outcry: the insides especially were audible with their "Who the *this*," and "What the *that*," making as though they would offer violence to the interposer, who, for his part, paid those who threatened him not so much as the compliment of a side glance, but approached in turn the young fighter, apparently a stranger to him, with such courteous plainness as did not miss of effect.

"Young man," said he, "I am but just come upon the ground and know nothing of the merits of this dispute, but I can well believe that it was not thou that struck the first blow. It will be the easier for thee to say thou art satisfied, and, believe me, nothing thou hast done will become thee half so well!"

The gentle winning manner and almost fatherly regard which accompanied these words, bespoke an excellent heart. The youth changed countenance, averted his face, and lowered his hands.

This brought the third inside to the front, who, after seeing

CHAPTER TWO

his wager as good as won, found an indecisive battle probable after all. Breaking upon the peace-maker with horrid language, he was for kicking him from the ring. This the crowd, who plainly knew and respected the man, would not permit, and he was allowed to take an outside seat without molestation, and the guard at this moment bidding his fares to get in or up, as their cases might be, the fight was drawn and all bets off.

The landlady, who, whilst blows were going, had approached step by step, open-mouthed, as if drawn by a magnet, now regained her sense of decorum, and with many "O la's" and "For shames" drove her maids before her within-doors, boxing the ear of the slowest.

The team were already put-to; the victor, abundantly congratulated and cheered, was helped into his clothes and regained his seat. The guard swung himself to the dicky, the horses, chilly from standing, went up into their collars with a will, and the last I saw of the beaten man for that time was his head over a stable bucket.

"That'll fare to dew Tom Doggett a heap o' good," wheezed the over-clothed passenger, who at the first round had been the bigger fellow's shrillest applauder. "A tarr'ble overbearin', high-stomached 'un be Tom! . . . knocked out in five minutes by a bit of a booy, as one may say! he! he! An' Tom a fighter for years past!"

"Niver i' the ring as I've heerd tell on; only acrost the table," said the coachman, whose opinion was that a man should stick to his trade. "If a drives, let um drive; if a rides, let um ride! and if so be a fights, let um fight the way as he is used to, and not goo foolin' with new-fangled contraptions."

With this for his text he embarked upon the story of "a young feller" of his acquaintance whose fall from virtue and prosperity was due, he assured us, to neglect of this maxim.

It appeared that this young man had served in the stables of

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

my lord Woodbridge, and having attracted the notice of his lordship by his excellent hands and light weight, had been promoted in town to second horseman, pad-groom and eventually coachman. In this position he was thrown much into his lordship's company during a time when the unfortunate nobleman suffered sorely with his eyes, and winning his absolute confidence, presently found himself master of the stables.

"Ah—h!" breathed the stalled ox in his rug with appreciative emphasis.

"Nat'rally he did hisself well," pursued the narrator, "takin' custom when up in town on all corn and forage what come into his deparkment. *That* was all right, and if he'd a-stuck to that he'd a-died comfor'ably off, for blind or seein', his lordship kep it up handsome, and the stables in Brook Street and Martlesham was allus full o' hosses."

"No chapmoney?" enquired a listener.

"In course there was chapmoney on every horse he bought — and he was allus a buying. Ten, twenty, thirty pound he'd get on a hoss, and quite right tew, them was his perks and that was his business, and if he'd only have stuck to that —"

"Get along, Jack, and cut your morals," laughed the young fighter.

"Well it ran to the harness, to the coaches; to the farriery and repairs; to the boots, breeches and liveries for hisself-an' his men. Even my lord's tailor and shoemaker was brought to book and stumped up custom to this young feller on what his lordship wore. By this he'd a-got the household under his thumb as well as the stables; not a man nor a maid but forked out his monthly scot or he'd a-got um the sack. My lord see with this young feller's eyes and heerd with his ears, and 'most did he bid um."

"Lord! what a che-ance he had, to be sure!" ejaculated the stout outside with an audible smack of the lip.

CHAPTER TWO

"Fare to make yar mouth water, don't it, bor? Ah! — An' if he'd only a-stuck to his business and kep honest! Well; what did his lordship do, being a lonely widow-man, but marry agin — a young 'un. Now this young feller should have gone steady for a stage, and drove on the bar till he see if the new pair drew together and how the coach travelled; 'stead o' which, bein' mortal confident and foolhardy, on he goes drivin' on the cheek same as ever. Round he comes to the tradesmen and takes toll on her ladyship's frocks and shifts and slippers."

"No!" cried the man's two auditors in different tones of delighted amazement.

"He did, I tell ye, *and it done for him*. Her ladyship was a deep 'un. She smoked him — "

"How, Jack?"

"Through her maid. Yes, 'twas one o' the maids blew the gaff, so 'tis said; I be proud 'twarn't a man. Anyhow, smokes him she does and says nought for a while. A deep 'un she is, but a very silly, innercent sort o' young thing to look at, is her ladyship, as I hears; one as makes herself free and affable with the lads, runs through the stables wi' bread for this horse and sugar for that horse, and rubs their noses and larns their names. And all this, mind ye, when that pore young feller was out with his lordship.

'Well, one day that pore young feller come in wi' a long face arsting a week's leave for to bury his mother what had died t'other side London; gets it, and off he trots.

"Next mornin' her ladyship finds three stalls empty, and hears from the leetlest and youngest boy as them three horses was gone for to be sold, and how that Fred-er-ick (Fred-er-ick being that pore young feller's name) was gone for to sell 'em.

"The boy ups and lets it out quite simple. None o' his lads had no 'spicions. Fred-er-ick bought hosses and sold hosses an'

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

did just as he damn pleased, and they all on 'em had understood for years past as his lordship was agreeable.

"Well, her ladyship being Norfolk bred herself rec'lects as Norwich fair was due, and she ups and writes a letter to her brother-in-law at Wymondham and sits down and waits.

"By-and-by back comes Fred-er-ick, and hears as his lady would like for to see him. Up he steps to her *bow-door* and finds my lady alone and very affable. He pitches his tale about his pore mother's end, and the burying and all, and what an expense it stood him in; and her ladyship nods and smiles, and says that must be considered; and, O, yes, she give him leave for to wear a crape band on his livery sleeve for a month. Just as he was making his leg for leaving the room, 'And O, Fred-er-ick,' says she, 'What has come to them three hosses,' (and she names 'em, pat) 'as stood in such and such a stable' (an' she reels it off straight)?

"'Dead and buried, milady,' says Fred-er-ick, without turnin' a hair, 'the glanders they'd got, as is sartain death to man and beast; so I ups and shoots the pore things, and if you'll b'lieve me, milady, 'twas a Christian end they made.'

"'Ah, pore creeturs,' says she. 'And are you sure they didn't suffer? Did ye do it your very own self?'

"'I did, marm,' sez he. 'Never a kick, marm, arter I pulled the trigger. 'Twere sudden death, sudden glory!'

"'What an ass! she had him fair!'" muttered the young fighter, his eyes dancing in his head.

"'And where did ye bury them?' says her ladyship. 'I should like to see the gravel!'

"Now, somethink in the woman's voice give that pore young feller the office, and he begun for to lose his head. For the life on him he couldn't rec'lec where he buried them hosses!

"Her ladyship watches him close and quiet, like a cat at a

CHAPTER TWO

mousehole; and 'Was ye ever at Norwich, Fred-er-ick?' says she.

"'Never in all my life, ma'am!' he raps.

"'*That will do,*' sez her ladyship's brother-in-law from behind a screen they'd rigged across that *bowdoor*, and out he come, and two constables with him, as had taken down that pore young feller's words, and Fred-er-ick he sees the game was up, for 'twas to her ladyship's own brother-in-law as he sold them three hosses at Norwich — all unbeknown — while them tew constables, 'guised as grooms, stood by and seen the guineas told inter his hat!"

"Well? What next? Go ahead, Jack," cried the audience, but a moralist is not to be hurried.

"An' *that's* what come o' goin' outside his business (which is what I never see no good on). Wi' everythink on earth a callin' on that pore young feller to goo straight and ac' honest, and he a-layin' by money and a-buying land — *land!*" — (the man's voice ran up into a cracked falsetto by way of emphasis) — "he must needs goo and take to a trade he warn't brought up to, a mighty teeklish trade too is hoss'-stealing — as I've heerd tell." He added this last as an after-thought.

"You don't say so?" remarked the young fighter, with covert mockery in his tone.

The Quaker, who during the story had sat lost in thought, glanced quickly at the speaker, whose voice and manner attracted and yet pained him.

"And what came next, Jack?"

"Steady! *May-ab!*" cried the driver, changing his hold upon the reins and using his whip the better to control the near leader. The beast was hanging and boring into her mate in fear of a line of foot-people, some kind of procession, which we were overtaking.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

These marched two-and-two, with bowed heads, shuffling along slowly through a cloud of bitter winter dust of their own raising, and were accompanied by an escort of mounted men armed with heavy whips and long bell-mouthed brass pistols.

As we drew abreast I was pained to see that every man of this doleful company was manacled by the wrist to a long chain which passed from end to end of the line. Many wore leg-irons, not light ones, either, but heavy and hampering one might almost have called them cruel, for the rags which padded the wearer's ankles were embrowned with blood.

I had heard of these transportation chain-gangs, but had not come across one, although the shipments to New Holland had begun ten years before.

The smell of these wretches and the clanking of their shackles so excited our leaders that after jibing well-nigh into the ditch, they swept us past at a gallop; yet not so fast but that our driver, scrutinizing the faces lifted in a kind of hopeless wonder, beheld one that he knew and half raised his right elbow, coachman-fashion, in token of recognition, whilst his chops fell in pitiful surprise.

"*What come next?*" he echoed harshly. What come *next*? God A-mighty! *that* come next! S'elp me, there be Fred-er-ick, ninth from the eend, off-side, the limp in' cove in fetters. So they didn't hang the pore young feller, seem'n'ly (He were left for death — didn't ye hear me say?) They frequent send 'em foreign now. That chain started from Norwich Castle a week or more back, and'll tramp to Plymouth, and then they'll goo a-shipboard for Gawd knows where! Some leetle island, one say, and another say *bottom-o'-the-bay*, and that's likeier, for ne'er a one comes back. Yes, damme, there goes the pore young feller I was tellin' ye of, a livin' moniment of fullishness, and all through not stickin' to his trade."

CHAPTER TWO

"The poltroon," said the young fighter, with hardening eye, "To let himself be taken — alive!"

A silence ensued; each was busy with his own thoughts, and I, for one, felt some impatience when the stalled ox inconsequently reverted to his discussion with the driver.

"Oh, I know what Tom Doggett can dew," he squeaked, "I sin um fight myself, once at Bury, once at Newmarket. They'd their lags tied behind the trestle. But 'twarn't what you might call fair matching either time; his men were light — light. Yew handles yer fistes right smart, young feller!" he remarked, turning to his companion, evidently willing to stand well with so redoubtable a boxer, and diplomatically ignoring the ground of dispute.

"Passably," replied the youth, and not for the first time I was aware of an unfamiliarity in his dialect and intonation. He had pronounced the first syllable so as to rhyme with *mass*, and I listened for more. But he spoke little and was presently set down at the cross-road to Hitchin and passed from my sight; yet the dark, alert, sharply-cut face had impressed my imagination and remained in my mind. I questioned the driver. "That'll be young Mister Sam'l Smith," said he in picked phrase which suggested that he was concocting his tale. "That there younker is a dealin'-man as does in malt, and come from somewheres about Peterboro'. A pleasant-spoken, peaceable young feller as you'd wish to see," he added as though these characteristics of his acquaintances would bear bringing into prominence.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THREE

I MAKE A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

A WRITER whose name escapes me has said that "all the world is a stage," discovering, as I suppose, a fanciful resemblance between a laden coach and the globe itself speeding thro' space with its load of humanity, agreeable or bickering, amused or bored, each outside pursuing his own journey engrossed with his private business, towards a destination unknown to his fellow travellers, and presently to relinquish his seat for ever.

The particular microcosm upon which I was now embarked exemplified this. It had witnessed the sudden outbreak of war, a still more sudden patching up of peace, financial speculation without result, the arrival of one passenger and the departure of another.

The Quaker had taken the seat behind mine. Soon after starting I had turned to him with the intention of addressing some commonplace remark, but had found him with closed eyes, composed and inaccessible, and had held my peace.

I had put the man down for what he was before he had opened his lips, his sect being well-known in the eastern counties, and I since childhood familiar with its soberly-clad adherents and their meeting-house in Peters Street, Ipswich: with its outside, that is to say, and its tiny burial-ground like a cloister-

CHAPTER THREE

garth hidden away amid its buildings and walled in from the street. I had peered through the seldom-opened wicket, and may even have envied the town-boy who cried "Quack!" threw his stone and ran, for no child of a family of our position, no Eton boy, would have set foot inside a dissenter's chapel.

As to the beliefs and practices of the sect, I had a vague notion that their meetings were held in a dreary silence, and that for some reason (presumably physical cowardice or calculated poltroonery), their men refused to resent injuries, to defend their women and goods, or to bear arms at the call of their king.

My fellow-traveller's behaviour had unsettled these preconceptions and had extorted my unwilling respect. The man's quiet hardihood and absolute self-command attracted me, for I myself would not for forty pounds have crossed a fight between strangers. A broken head, with the horse-trough to follow, were the probable rewards of interference in such disputes.

That this man had not only escaped mobbing by the ring, but had brought both principals and spectators to his way of thinking, argued a strong personality.

At that day fighting was the national sport, the passion, preoccupation and chief interest of a large proportion of Englishmen of every class.

At Eton I had fought as a matter of course. My lifelong friendship with the gallant, the lamented, the Honourble Robert Elwes Dawnay, last Viscount Wokingham, originated in a determined bout of fisticuffs. The custom was sanctioned by our masters, who watched and applauded these contests, their presence stimulating pluck and ensuring fair play. Not only oppidan and collegier, but every urchin at his dame-school, and in the nursery itself, doubled chubby fists upon the least occasion; and mother or governess, whilst crying out upon

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

the resultant black eyes, secretly rejoiced over the stoutness of both victor and vanquished, whilst impartially whipping both.

The contest which I had witnessed, far from shocking me, struck me as less vigorously pursued, less obstinate and vindictive than many at which I had been present, and was singular only in its conclusion.

It was a day when most gentlemen boxed and supported the art; when matches were publicly advertised, put up, trained for and decided in every county in England. Pugilism was, however, not then the recognized profession which it afterwards became. A class of paid fighting men was indeed coming into existence, and, so to say, demanding the recognition it abundantly obtained during the Regency.

At the time of which I am writing the laws of the ring had not been codified, nor the practice brought to the perfection it reached in the hands of Gentleman Jackson. Each county had its rules and its methods; not only were the size and shape of the ring undetermined, but the ring itself was far from universal. In sea-ports (as on ship-board) the combatants bestrode a bench and fought knee to knee. In the midlands it was still customary to strap the ankles of the prizers beneath a table.

The natural consequence of this universal brutality, in which all classes participated, and from which the Church was not exempt,¹ was national hardness of heart, disregard for pain, whether effecting one's neighbour or one's self, deadness of sympathy and deafness to the cry of the poor. In short, it bred a callousness of nerve and a tendency in any emergency or contest to subordinate convenience, feeling, or even con-

¹Upon later revision my Great Uncle regretted this passage, and desired to except from this sweeping indictment the Evangelical Clergy, Methodists and some dissenting sects unnamed. *Exor.*

CHAPTER THREE

science, to an over-mastering resolve to keep one's hands up and see the thing through.

This combative habit had its compensations, and was (under Providence) permitted, let us believe, in view of that truly tremendous conflict in which, without desire or choice of its own, our nation was already engaged. No race that counted noses or cultivated nerves, or regarded as conclusive the first round (or the twenty-first, for that matter) would have come up to time as stubbornly as did my countrymen during those long black years when all the world seemed upon us, which began with the loss of Hanover and ended with the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo.

For this unconscionable digression I can only offer the excuse of my grey hairs and a tendency to garrulity of which I am growingly conscious.

Let me hasten to overtake the stage, now lumbering along the turnpike with the borough of Huntingdon almost in sight.

Considering my youth and country breeding I must have possessed fair powers of observation. It had occurred to me that an understanding subsisted between our coachman and the adroit young pugilist, hence, when the latter, having feed the guard, had let himself down by the wheel, I had watched his departure with an interest which had attracted the attention of the Quaker.

"May I enquire if thee knows that young man?" said he. I replied that I did not, and, being weary of my own company and willing to make further acquaintance with this singular fanatic, shifted my position to converse with more ease. He remarked that the youth's features were curiously familiar, but that the circumstances of any previous meeting eluded him. Nor could he recall the name. (We both tacitly rejected the one supplied by the driver.) He then gazed long at the diminishing

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

figure and when he turned to me again, "That is a young man of parts," said he, "an uncommon person. He has gifts, and has had providences, and, unless I am mistaken, he is sinning his mercies, for there goes with him a savour of death unto death."

These words, spoken slowly close to my ear and audible to me alone, gave me a peculiar sensation. Never had I encountered any person whom I could imagine using such language, or taking the view of life which it indicated. "Gifts," "providences," "mercies," "savours," were not so much the jargon of a sect as a novel dialect denoting a foreignness of mind which, in a person of tried courage, did not repel me as it otherwise might have done.

Now that I regarded the speaker closely I found him well shaven and faultlessly clean, with the clear skin and eye of abstinent health. All of his dress that appeared was of good material, serviceable and well-brushed, not so much out of the mode as following a fashion of its own.

But it was the man's countenance that commended him as he bent over me, for his seat was somewhat the higher; it was so pleasantly homely, so unembarrassed, so honest, and as unaffectedly anxious to be of service as is the face of a good dog that follows a worthy master, and (alas that it should be so!) what can a man say more?

I had made him no reply, but my features, upon which he was bestowing a steady and kindly scrutiny, must have encouraged him to proceed. The door stood open and he entered.

"There is a sin unto death," he said very lowly, as to himself. I did not then know that he quoted.

"Yet he gave away the fight upon your persuasion, sir," I observed. He fell a-musing.

"I think it probable," said he at length, "that it was not my words but my appearance which so put him out of

CHAPTER THREE

countenance." I stared. "He recognized me and feared — why, I know not, — lest I should recognize him."

"But, sir," said I, "what had he to fear, with all the right upon his side? Nor, should I think the loser will be a penny the worse for his drubbing at the week's end. That young man was abused and beaten without reason before you drove up."

"Are thee sure it was without reason? Does thee know what has passed between those men before to-day? Thomas Doggett I know for a proud man. He is not of my way of thinking. He is hasty as to his temper; but I have found him just and upright in his dealings. His tongue is an unruly member, but not untruthful."

This led me to reflect that the actual challenge had come from the younger man and that there was some colour for the view that the combatant who had worsted his adversary with his fists had previously bested him at a contest of brains.

The coachman and the third outside were discussing the merits of the Suffolk punch, or sorrel. Under cover of their conversation my sober companion, whose wise, gentle regard I felt upon me, presently resumed his discourse.

"We are drawing near to Huntingdon, where we shall part with small likelihood of meeting again. I have a word for thee. It has been shewn me that there is a cloud overshadowing thee, but that there is a silver lining to the cloud. Remember it is the Divine ordering that clouds shall pass, and doubt not the love of thy Heavenly Father."

If anyone had foretold an hour earlier that such a rigmarole warning would be addressed to me on a public vehicle by a perfect stranger, a low-bred person and a dissenter, and that instead of resenting the impertinence I should take it in excellent part — if anyone, I say, had ventured to predict this, I should have laughed him to scorn: yet, thus it befell; and the

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Quaker seeing how it stood with me, continued after a brief pause:

"I have been told that I am a discerner of spirits, and indeed at times I am favoured by the Master to see the conditions of the hearts of those I am thrown with and to speak to their conditions in His name.

"I am old enough to have been thy father, and have not long since laid in the grave a son of about thy years. My young friend, my heart goes out to thee in love! Thou wilt ride rough waters, but thou wilt come through. The floods shall not overflow thee." His voice was very low and near, and rose and fell in a kind of breathing chant. "Thou shalt be used, my son, and shalt be led by the hand of Him who bought thee. There is a service set apart for thee, and a light within thee to guide thee; a light of which thou art not yet aware; it shall broaden and brighten upon thy path; O, obstruct it not!

"Thou hast but a little strength, and art soon to pass into a dark room; do not disbelieve in the dark what thou hast seen in the light!"

The coach slackened and stood. We were in Huntingdon market-place. I, so completely taken up with my companion, who, in this minute's space had grown more intimate than my mother, and had unlocked chambers in my heart of the very existence of which I had been unconscious, had seen gardens and gables flow past as in a dream. Now I started as from a trance, blinked, smiled, and offered my hand; it was taken and held for a moment in the Quaker's large firm grasp, and then he was gone and I had not asked his name.

This, as I afterwards recognized, was one of the milestones of my life. Until now the varied shows of my journey had found me an amused and indulgent spectator, with an irresponsible guffaw for the comedy of things, and for graver passages an impatient shrug.

CHAPTER THREE

But this Quaker had left something of himself with me that I could not away with. I was uneasily conscious of the new malady of thought. In a word, I was from this moment no longer the mere boy.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER FOUR

TRIVIALITIES OF THE NORTH ROAD

IT seems that I was not to leave Huntingdon without my first visit to the place being suitably impressed upon my memory.

The *North Star*, upon which I obtained a seat, was delayed by the procession of javelin-men escorting the circuit judge to the Assize.

As a sign of respect to the King's justice, the stage was drawn clear of the road, and we all got down and uncovered; some lords justices were known to be punctilious, and we had no desire to be ordered back into the town to purge an unintentional contempt with humble apologies after hours of delay.

I need not describe a pageant familiar to you all, suffice it I was paying less heed to the great man himself than to his guard, who seemed well-bred young fellows of my age, when the blazon upon his panel caught my eye; it was our family coat differenced, or rather with the badge of cadency added, and, glancing at the occupant of the carriage, I beheld my father's features, but sharper and paler; the calmly-roving eye which met mine was the full dark Fanshawe grey that you will see in the earlier Bramford portraits.

Upon enquiry, I found that I had been watching the progress of my relation, Sir Algernon Maskelyne-Fanshawe, the head

CHAPTER FOUR

of the younger branch of our house, between whom and my father an inherited suit in Chancery was pending.

With so palpable a barrier to friendly intercourse between us, it was no wonder that we had never met, yet I recalled remarks dropped by my lord as to this man's rise in the world. The poverty to which long litigation had reduced his parents had stimulated him to exertions which had raised him step by step in his profession, until he was able to relinquish the largest income of his day at the Bar in exchange for the ease of the Bench.

"And may wish himself back again, yet," said my informant under his breath, glancing sidelong at the back of the slow-moving equipage. "That son of his, young George — 'Fanny', as his friends call him — is making the guineas fly; horses, gaming, women, wagers! phew! 'Tis a pity, for the judge is a man of a thousand."

The consideration of what this man had effected, the barriers he had forced in his unaided progress to the front, his studious nights and laborious days, patience, abstinence, constancy, affected me like a rebuke. I rated myself for an idle, useless dog, and pondered what manner of provision I could earn for my necessities if by any chance I were brought to want. This train of enquiry lowered still further my self-conceit, for I found myself ignorant of the rudiments of every single handicraft, and more than doubted whether at the tightest pinch I could fit a shoe to a nag's hoof if it were ready forged to my hand; an operation I had watched and criticised a hundred times at least.

What then, said I, could I turn to? Some livelihood there must needs be for a tall fellow such as I; something above the drudgery of field labour or the slavery of the common soldier, a life which I had always heard condemned as the most miserable of existences save that of the mariner.

I decided at length that should fortune forsake me, and I be driven to work for my bread, my occupation should be about

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

horses, not as groom or coachman, for their service subjects them, as I now reflected for the first time, to the caprices of the most idle and thoughtless people in the world, who, having little to occupy them, must needs do by night what they might more reasonably do by day, so that their servants are kept upon the roads in darkness and hunger in all weathers, and, being unable to get regular meals or sleep, betake themselves to drink. "Rather than this," thought I, "I will drive a stage wagon; it is at least a responsible and, in its way, an honourable calling, and such a one as that Quaker would approve!" And at this I laughed, finding that the whole train of thought, so unc customary in a very thoughtless young fellow, had been induced by the influence of this recent acquaintance. Yet, for the rest of the day when we overtook or met one of those broad-wheeled, slow-moving wains with its team of smoking shire-breds lifting vast hairy fetlocks and travelling to the music of their bells, I scrutinized the faces of the wagoners, and wondered what was passing in their minds, what they earned, and where they would lie at night.

It was at Grantham or Newark, I cannot remember which, but it was at a town with a mighty fine steeple, that we first learned of the horse-robberies further north. Small rudely-printed bills were handed round in the inn-yard, and large posters with fuller particulars were stuck upon stable doors and displayed in the coffee-room.

It seemed that during the previous month horses had been disappearing from widely separated districts in a manner at present unexplained. The season being mild and dry, an unusual number of animals were still at grass and under small supervision, and it was from these the thieves had selected their booty. Between twenty and twenty-five valuable young horses were missed from South Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire; some of these had been tracked into Thorne Waste, but none

CHAPTER FOUR

had been recovered. The most had vanished strangely — been spirited away, as one might put it. Rewards were offered, of course, and many a stubbly chin was rubbed over the matter.

A stage or two further north we were met by a flight of posters still sticky from the press. These notified us of a yet more recent and daring crime, perhaps a fortnight old, but discovered within the week.

The scene of this felony was Holderness, and the sufferer one Sir Grandison Constable, of Burton Constable, a demesne remarkable for preserving a herd of wild cattle — one of the last in Britain, as I have heard say. It was from the park itself, and almost from under the windows of the mansion, that fifteen four-year-old blood horses had been stolen.

It was at first believed that they had strayed, and, being unshod, none supposed they could travel far, and time was wasted in drawing coverts in neighbouring parishes. This hope was abandoned when remains of charcoal, hoof-parings, and what-not were found in a secluded spinney, showing that horses had been cast and shod there in clandestine fashion. Later the drove was tracked to Ferriby, and there the scent failed, the horse-boat plying between this place and Barton, on the Lincolnshire side of the estuary, being missing.

Our coachman, who professed to know the district, gave it as his opinion that an attempt had been made to put the Humber between the stolen nags and the hue and cry and had succeeded only too well.

“Ye may lay yer lives this ’ere is what befell, sirs; they got ’em aboard, tied ’em head-and-tail, and, mebbe, blindfolded ’em to quiet ’em. The tide turned agin the wind, the boat lay over, the load shifted, a ’oss kicked, another kicked, and then they was all kickin’ like h—ll, and over went the ferry! And Sir Grandison or ’ere a one else as be interested in they ’osses may find ’em knockin’ about the Dogger Bank!”

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

All which seemed sufficiently plausible for the most of the man's audience, yet did a doubt cross my mind too shadowy to justify speech. Having nothing better to do I was studying the bill as I rode, and had found in the list of missing animals descriptions of a matched pair of sixteen-hand geldings, iron-grey with black points, each having a white off hind-foot. Now it occurred to me that the colour, though not unknown, is unusual in blood-stock, and further, that although the appearance of a single animal tallying with this might admit of explanation yet the occurrence of a pair was at least suspicious. Now, the day before I had left home my father had bought just such a pair from an Ipswich dealer on his way from Norwich horse-fair for our neighbour the Marquise de la Rochemesnil, an *émigrée* of the French noblesse, who rented my mother's dower-house in the adjoining parish of Sproughton. In fact, it was this pair I had met upon the road at my setting out, and their points were clearly in my head.

No suspicion of the seller lurked in my mind. I knew him for an honest fellow, as dealers go. If his tale were true — as was as good as certain — they had been sold in market overt and were legally his.¹ (O, youngster as I was, I knew so much; anything touching a horse stayed in a noddle where little else found lodgment!)

I did no more than play with the idea that these were the missing cattle. That they had passed under the hammer at Norwich a week since forbade their having been stolen from a park in the East Riding a fortnight ago. No horse brought up from grass could have made the journey. And yet — the thought came to me like a gleam of light from under a locked door — *if* that horse-boat had reached the North Sea on the ebb under skilled hands, *if* she had run with a northerly breeze

¹ Not so, by a long way. A bit of bad law this, as I have since learnt to my cost. — G. F.

CHAPTER FOUR

for the Wash and discharged her lading — say at Burnham Thorpe, or better still, near Lynn — those horses *might* have reached Norwich the night before the fair and a week ahead of the bills.

I set myself to plan the roguery, and was soon convinced that though conceivable it was mighty unlikely. It needed the concurrence of such ticklish customers as two couple (at least) of Gypsy farriers, a gang of skilful and daring copers not less than eight strong, and a crew of east-coast smugglers, Wash pilots, who could thrid those unlighted, unbuoyed channels at the nick of the tide and in the darkness of a moonless winter's night. Above all, the venture called for the head of a general.

And with that I fell to imagining the bodily seeming of such a man.

To make it possible to gather round him and hold in subjection such discordant confederates needed age; experience to confer authority; presence and bodily strength beyond the common to enforce it. Such a fellow had need to be as broad as a door and six-foot four in his stocking feet, active, silent and sudden as a lurcher, but tenacious as the bull-dog himself. A tried mariner, too, was required and — O, marvellous, a skilled jockey! Inland bred and able to pass as such, and yet a seafarer! A combination of Dick Turpin and Captain Kidd. My imagination carrying me no further, I yawned and nodded.

One more incident, a trivial one, occurred on the journey. It was at the last changing-house before we reached York — Tadcaster, surely — that I watched a traveller's gig, seated for two, approach and pass us as we stood. It was drawn by a blood mare, a free-stepping strawberry roan. The driver's face was hidden by the wide brim of his beaver: he seemed a slight, elderly man, decently dressed in tradesman fashion, and, quite unremarkable, had not the girl at his side, warmly cloaked

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

and hooded, turned up to me a face so innocent and beautiful and young as to stir my pulses for the moment. What was strange, I felt certain upon the instant that I had met her before. But where?

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER FIVE

OFFICERS AND GENTLEMEN

UPON reaching York, where I put up at the *Black Swan* in Coney Street, my immediate business was to have reported myself to my commanding officer; a duty I foolishly delayed from day to day whilst awaiting the coming of my sea-borne mails, until my colonel, having learned of my arrival from a third party, sent to my lodging to know if I were indisposed.

Upon this hint, having made what toilet I could, I waited upon him the next morning. But my tardiness had touched his spleen: I had done upon compulsion what should have been prompted by zeal, and had but myself to thank for the coolness of my reception.

What Sir Bulstrode had expected to see I know not, but his disappointment was evident. I was at that time a tall, ungainly youth of the sort that furnishes late, as we say of a hound, and gave small promise on first acquaintance of either strength or smartness.

I am under the impression that I walked as gamekeepers walk, with a slouch, and stood as huntsmen stand, with heels apart. In a word, I must have cut an unmartial figure, and fallen easily into unmilitary postures equally distasteful to the eye of a martinet; but of these defects I was naturally unconscious.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

If I misliked him, he as plainly distasted me, and fell across me with his first word, rating me for travelling stage. "Young man," said he, "did no one tell ye that a carabineer posts when he cannot ride? If ye can't earn your salt, sir, don't disgrace your mess."

As my absence was of old standing and unremarked for years, I could not divine why it should be found so offensive at this particular juncture, until some word he let drop supplied me with the clue, and enabled me to piece out the great man's grievance from the fragments of soliloquy with which he interlarded his censure.

It appeared that apprehensions of rebellion among the Presbyterians of Ulster had led to the Fifth (which was next upon the roster for foreign service) being brought up to its full strength whilst under-officered.

This had been no easy matter, for the bounty was low and the service excessively unpopular, the disgraces sustained at the hands of the revolted Colonists being still fresh in men's minds.

Hence, for want of better, our squadrons were stuffed with Hessians, Irish papists, jail-birds, and the worst characters of other regiments, yes, and the rawest clodhoppers from the militia, who were daily bumped around the riding-school or exercised upon Knavesmire.

"And just when I am at my wits' end for serviceable officers — for my senior Major — confound him! has seen fit to ask leave upon some blanked pretext, a wedding, or a funeral, or the Lord knows what — just when I am damnably short-handed and in need of men — *men*, I repeat, not hobbledchoys, sir! — *You* do me the honour to report yourself; *you*, who, they tell me, are as ignorant of your drill and duties as an applewoman, and have yet to learn upon which side to mount your charger!"

CHAPTER FIVE

I was young enough to assure him that I was considered a fair horseman, but correction seldom mollifies an irritated superior, and I joined under the cloud of his unconcealed displeasure.

To have put myself upon my colonel's black book was misfortune enough had it come singly, but it had not, for, I was to learn later, I had an ill-wisher among my fellow subalterns, who had conceived a dislike for me before so much as seeing my face. And for the following reason. This gentleman, Lieutenant Ganthony by name, as my senior in the service, had had the first refusal of the troop which I now commanded, but had squandered in a night at loo, the regulation purchase-money sent him by a doting mother, who had done more wisely to have transacted the business through an agent. Upon this my father had secured the step for me as next for seconding, and Mr. Ganthony, having thus conceded to a youngster both rank and seniority which had once been at his fingers' ends, was at little pains to conceal his jealousy of his supplanter.

Of all this I was at the time as ignorant as a babe, nor could imagine in what manner I had offended this man, who seemed at all times, and especially when inflamed with liquor, disposed to put some affront upon me. It came to a head within the week. He swung into my room unannounced whilst I was dressing after my second riding-school, and taking possession of my bed, sate very much at his ease quizzing my belongings and rolling an unlighted cigar between his lips, his legs at full stretch occupying the half of my floor-space.

"And so," said he, without salutation of preface, "you are brother to my old friend Bramford?"

I nodded, not too cordially. "Haw, the devil ye are!" said my visitor, and spat upon the floor and, carelessly begging my pardon, resumed, "I take it ye know that your brother owes me money?" He eyed me askance, between two minds, as I

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

thought, whether to bully or to cajole. I, having my chin up before my glass, was getting my stock to sit to my liking and was thus excused from immediate reply had the remark been a question in form. These news might very well be true, but my brother's affairs were nothing to me.

"I am waiting to hear what ye have to propose, Mr. Fanshawe: I presume ye will take up your brother's paper?"

I laughed shortly and angrily. "What? a second son pay his elder brother's debts?—and at a moment's notice?—whoever heard the like?"

"'Tis the rule of the regiment, sir," said he, "and let me tell you at once that unless ye settle you will not do for the carabineers."

This bluster tasted flat as stale beer; he neither repeated his demand nor arose to go, but fell a-musing. "'Twas a wager upon that match between your brother's 'Rhodomontade' and Mr. Vyze's 'Roysterer,'" said he. 'Rhodomontade' broke a blood-vessel. Bramford took the brute over from the beau when they dispersed their joint stable. Ye know Vyze?"

I had heard the name of my brother's racing partner, but no more, and confessed to no interest in the matter. I yawned, but my caller stuck.

"Bramford is most damnably dipped, as all the town knows," said he; "the only question is whether this woman will pull him round. He is for marrying, ye understand."

I pricked my ears. He maundered on.

"What's her property? Is it tied up? She's the Marquise de la Something-or-other, they say. '*Lew-eeel, mong ongel*' is all the little fool's cry when he's squiffy;" he drew a ridiculous grimace and mimicked my brother's tone to the life.

I had heard enough. If Bramford had played the fool he might stand the racket, but the lady was another matter. Not one syllable affecting her should pass my lips, nor the lips of

CHAPTER FIVE

this fellow if I were man enough to prevent him. I had been warming up for a minute past and suddenly grew hot. I pointed to the corridor.

"W-what?" he stammered, realizing the situation. "D'ye show me the door?"

"Would ye chuse the window, Mr. Ganthony?" I riposted just above a whisper, tingling and above myself, for the man was tall and big and years my senior. But there was no fight in the fellow that day: my little room was soon rid of him; yet I had provided myself with an enemy whose malice was to cost me my commission, and to put me in danger of my life — yes, and to dog my path for many a year after he was laid in a felon's grave.

As will presently appear, my term of service with the colours was too short to entitle me to form an opinion, yet, immature as I was, I thought at the time that my regiment was in as ill a posture for active service as His Majesty's enemies could have desired: an opinion only too soon to be justified.

If the mess numbered any zealous or competent officers, I was unfortunate in failing to make their acquaintance.

The handling of the new drafts was left to the sergeants, truculent and vicious fellows, whose treatment of the unfortunate privates was a misery to witness.

Discipline was terribly severe, having been recently tightened under the expectation of active service. Nor were the troopers singular in their experiences; the subalterns had their share of injustice, and even ill-usage, to support.

I was by nature light-hearted and of a careless and sanguine temperament; a cadet of a soldiering family, I had looked forward to wearing my sovereign's uniform since the day I was breeched, and was not in the least disposed to quarrel with honourable comrades or reasonable conditions of service. That I signally failed to conform to the conditions, or to ingratiate

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

myself with my mess, and presently involved myself in a scandalous fracas which to some extent has overshadowed my life, was not, I solemnly aver, owing to faults of mine. I am now an old man, duly sensible of my failings and thankful for many mercies, and I have set myself to review, pen in hand, the events of my early life, for the instruction, as I trust, of my young relatives; but, ponder it as I will, I can hardly blame myself for the thing that occurred.

To begin with, the British army which has since wreathed its standards with laurels and can well afford to admit the truth, was at this juncture as pitifully ill-found and as notoriously ill-led as at any period in its history.

We had been beaten in our last war, but had learned nothing by our reverses. Jobbery and petticoat influence were rather the rule of the service than the exception, and jobbery and petticoat influence, whilst promoting the worst, had sapped the zeal and soured the spirits of the best.

A minister paid his tailor's bill with a commission. Years of active service and a dozen wounds in front went for nothing if one's rival stood well in the graces of the mistress of a royal duke.

The gentlemen who bore His Majesty's commissions had bought their commands, and naturally looked to see value for their money, regarding the army as existing for their benefit and not themselves for the benefit of the army.

In short, a captain getting his company got a flock to shear, and too often shorn it so closely as to ruin its efficiency. Some regiments were notoriously rotten.

In the case of the carabineers matters were approaching a pass to which there was but one issue — disgraceful disaster — from participating in which I was, by the mercy of Divine Providence, timely removed.

The day was a day of hard drinking and high play. Certain

CHAPTER FIVE

messes had the name for this vice, others for that; the one which I had joined was noted for excess in both.

A youthful subaltern, pink and smiling from his mother's parting embrace, with his father's guineas jingling in his fob, was the natural prey of the regimental hawks.

I was the pigeon, and had without doubt been denuded of every feather, had not a certain shrewdness acquired in the hunting-field, at the horse-fair and at market, a rustical shrewdness, no doubt, but better than none, stood me in good stead.

The latest addition to the mess was not such a fool as he looked. One was for selling me a charger and took very ill my detection of a side-bone. Another would teach me pool, and found at the expense of certain half-crown lives (which he never paid) that I was not so unskilled as he had hoped. We had a table at home.

But I was in their hands, whether jolted in school upon the trickiest horse in the regiment, or working through the long toast-list under the vigilant eyes of seasoned men interested in breaking down my sobriety under guise of "making my head."

The rule of our mess was imperative. The servants were under penalties to fill to the brim, and the gentleman was fined a bottle who failed to take down his quantum to the last drop and reverse his glass whilst awaiting the return of the decanter.

With the cards, with the cues, and with the dice they ambushed my quarter's allowance, and not wholly in vain, and by these and similar practice would have brought me to pecuniary embarrassment had time permitted.

That my health and habit of body would have suffered had I continued a member of this mess is most probable; thus, both character, person and pocket benefited by what seemed at that time the unmitigated calamity which now overtook me.

One of our customs, to which I have not alluded, was the

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

perpetration of the most outrageous practical jokes. Sometimes brutal, often offensive to good taste, always disagreeable to the victim, who was usually a subaltern too young to resent effectually the pranks of his seniors, these practices had already given our mess a bad name and had led to hostile meetings.

The burlesque courts-martial, duckings in the horse-trough, hay-makings in the rooms of shy young cornets, inspired me with the silent resolution to defend myself if attacked by all legitimate means. I was conscious of a long reach and heavy left hand, and if matters went ill, why, there was my father's gift. I had been too long my own master to subject myself again to wanton indignities which, as a lower boy at Eton, I had accepted as the course of nature.

That I should remain many days exempt from the high spirits of certain members of my mess seemed unlikely. That any warning of impending evil should reach me was improbable, for to spoil sport was a thing unpardonable by the regimental code.

Not one of my fellows in misfortune lifted an eyelid, and I owed my safety to my servant, a poor, honest fellow, whose goodness of heart had survived the discouragements of a trooper's life.

A Stowmarket man, Hymus by name, he warmed towards a young scapegrace of a master, upon whose tongue still hung something of our Suffolk drawl.

Despite my resolution, I own that I fell into something like a panic when my batman gave me the office.

"That do sim to me, sir," he began in a nervous whisper, "that onless yew be uncommon fly, sir, yew'll be carried to bed drunk to-night, sir."

I was prepared for worse news, and said so; but there was more behind.

CHAPTER FIVE

"I see six heel-ropes a-smuggled intew Mr. Wallop's quarters this arternoon," he said, nodding mysteriously. "'Tis him and Mr. Ganthony is on the job, them and a brace o' mess waiters. I wormed it out o' one on 'em by stan'nin' him his drink; thankye, sir; Gawd on'y knows what um's up tew!"

"But I shall mind what I take and lock and bolt myself in."

For all reply he held the candle to the door (I was dressing for mess, and he had just tied my queue) and made me see the bread stoppings to holes whence the screws which had held the furniture to the wood had been removed. Then, after reconnoitring the passage and finding it clear, he signed me to follow, and silently showed me certain auger-drills in the door and jamb. I was to be screwed in.

With much precaution he lighted me back into my room, and closed the door. "Wooden pegs won't stand a kick, sir. I smoked 'em just afore ye come up. Most unfortnitly there ain't no time to rectify our defences, sir."

"You must get into the city and back," I began, but he wagged his head.

"Beg y' pardon, captain, but 'twas belts again last night in Walmgate atween our Irish and the militia. A couple o' them East Ridings was laid out. Ye'll find, if ye arst, as all leave be stopped until the militia be disbanded, or till we gets the route, sir."

He was right. Fresh screws were not to be come by that night, nor was there anything in the room solid enough to reinforce the door if heavily attacked.

"For Gawd's sake, don't ye go for to bring me inter this here, sir!" entreated my only friend, when having done his part he found my eye turn helplessly to his. I knew that he had reason for his plea and promised.

There was only myself to depend upon. The spirit and resource of a home-bred youth to pit against the experienced

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

malice of adepts. It was no wonder if I failed, if indeed my failure were not rather (under God's providence) in the nature of success.

By simulating sickness I escaped from mess early with a clear head, and waited what should befall ambushed in the quarters of an officer who lodged upon the same landing.

Soon after midnight I heard the enemy approach, stumbling up the stair in different stages of drink, Captain Wallop quarrelsome, his satellite Ganthony hilarious, and checking with difficulty a disposition to sing. A girl was with them.

Expecting no resistance they made for my quarters. I heard them force the door; the outcry of surprise which greeted the empty bed: the sounds of falling crockery and furniture.

In one instant I was upon them, demanding what they did in my rooms.

My manifest sobriety checked them, but only for a moment.

"Whoo — oop!" yelled Ganthony shutting an eye and putting a finger in his ear.

"Ropes!" cried the Captain, and I had a glimpse of a couple of troopers hurrying up with something in hand.

Wallop, who held the light, flashed it in my eyes, and setting it down, flicked me across the mouth with the back of his open hand, and stood ready, poised and swaying to get in his blow if I moved. He was reported a great boxer: a tall, high-coloured man, his cheeks flushed and his eyes glazed with wine shone in the candle-light.

To speak truth I was now prodigiously frightened, my indignation having carried me into a situation from which I saw no chance of honourable issue. The room was small, and encumbered with overset chairs, and I beset on all sides by men in no condition to hear reason, whom I could neither escape nor resist.

At this juncture help came from an un-looked for quarter. The girl, the soberest of the party, mistrusting her chances of

CHAPTER FIVE

safety in a general mellay in such a cock-pit, suddenly clung to Wallop's arm. "Ye fool," cried she, "doan't ye see it winna work?"

Her master shook her off roughly and boxed her ear, and upon the instant I delivered the heaviest left-handed upper-cut I could manage. He must have been just within distance for he took the wall with the back of his head and rebounded at the moment when his confederate, exchanging the fatuous humour for the frantic, flung himself upon me from behind, hiccoughing a curse. Spinning upon my heel, I dealt him a right half-arm hook under the angle of the jaw, and slipt from between them. They encountered and fell locked. The girl, grinning broad approval, blew out the light, and the mess-waiters rushing in, fell over the legs of the fallen into blows, pitch-darkness, broken crockery and vile language.

The lass let a shriek, and caught me around the neck. "Run, laad!" she whispered; "Tha's a reet good 'un, but tha' canna fet all fower!"

She ended with a hearty buss, and pushed me towards the door. We heard, as we felt our way along the corridor, the thud and rattle of heavy blows, both officers bawling to their men to tie me. Thus ended, as far as I was concerned, a scuffle which from first to last had passed in a matter of six seconds.

The woman and I parted company at the foot of the stairs upon the rain-wetted stones of the barrack yard.

The picket sentry, coughing in his box, heard and saw nothing, but I guessed from the movements of a lanthorn that the main-guard was being turned out, and, having no desire to lodge a complaint of an affair I fancied I had come well out of, made for the empty mess-house and passed the night coldly upon a settee, shaken at intervals with convulsions of mirth, and indulging the most humorous speculations as to what had befallen my visitors after the departure of their host.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

From this retreat I reconnoitred my way to my quarters in the gloom of early morning. The door creaked and gave to my shoulder. The screwing-up attempted hastily and in darkness by half-intoxicated men was a failure.

Picking my way among disarranged furniture, I found candle and tinder-box where I had hidden them. At the first gleam of light, a groan and some movements in the room startled me. Upon my bed lay Ganthony trussed and corded like a capon, gagged with a twisted towel that had not missed much of making an end of him.

This totally unexpected apparition startled me out of my propriety, and by a natural revulsion I was seized by such a paroxysm of laughter as has possessed me but twice or thrice in my life. The inference to be drawn from this absurd spectacle was plain. The heavier man had temporarily stunned the weaker in the rally in which I had left them; and, convinced that this confederate had slunk off, but that he had me under his hand, Wallop had superintended the roping and gagging as well as total darkness, a broken head and a skinful of liquor had permitted.

Humanity prompted me to cast loose the bruised and benumbed figure upon the bed, but the reaction due to a sleepless night, the struggle and the anxieties attendant, added to the shock of this discovery, so overset me, that leaning against the wall, candle in hand, I wept and crowed in helpless merriment, and in this condition was found by Hymus coming in with my razors and shaving-dish.

I can still see him, a picture of bewilderment framed by the darkness of the doorway, both hands occupied, swaying irresolute, unwilling either to enter or to retire, solicitude for his master and fears for himself pulling him in opposite directions, as solutions of what he beheld and its possible consequences occurred to him.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Good-morning to you, Mr. Ganthony!" laughed I, getting some command of myself at length. "I trust, sir, you have slept well, although you have mistaken my bed for your own. What! not a word of thanks or explanation, sir! But, oh, I perceive your mouth is full. You supped monstrous well, Mr. Ganthony. I can but congratulate myself upon missing such embarrassing hospitality."

These jeers, however well merited, were in mighty poor taste, and were occasioning the acutest confusion to Hymus. Merely to have witnessed, however inadvertently, the ignominious disgrace of a superior, might — according to the disposition of the person concerned — be worth a couple of guineas hush-money and promotion to lance, or bring down upon him a spite which would embitter the remainder of his service.

He beckoned me to follow him to the stair-head.

"Beggin' your pardon, captain, but this hare's no larfin' matter. 'Tis long ways past a joke, sir. Cap'n Wallop's werry bad, sir; ye hit him a devilish crack, sir; on the back o' the head, too. An' the guard was turned out and madam nabbed ('twas her squealin' as blew the gaff'). How they failed o' findin' Mr. Ganthony beats me; but lights was out.

"Well, sir, if yew'll be advised by me, yew'll cast the gen'lman loose, brew 'um somethink hot, and sorter fare to make it up wi' him. Yew'll want all the friends yew've got arter this hare job. If yew can just make shift to shave yarself for this once I'll set to and rub the gen'lman down for parade."

I was too young and puffed-up to take this honest fellow's advice in its entirety or to let it alone.

To treat the affair as a jest and win the unlucky perpetrator's goodwill by frankly ignoring the unpardonable was a course with much to recommend it. To call in the officer of the day and request him to make a minute of the facts would have

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

He snapped rueful fingers to express the value of a life under such conditions, and again his hands fell to his sides.

"May the Lord have mercy 'pon poor Hymus!" he said; his mouth loosened and worked; his eyes filled and ran over silently.

I had begun by thinking his fears extravagant, but not even the selfish optimism of youth was proof against this exhibition; and indeed I had seen enough in my fortnight's service to give colour and form to his hints.

"But you shall not come to harm; I swear it!" I exclaimed, turning very red. "Look here, man, what will it cost to buy your discharge?"

"Twenty pound, captain; they raised it to that last month; not that I could find twenty shillin' if 'twas to save my mortal soul! No! No! So soon as ever yar honour's back is turned, I'll be down for fatigue; the sergeants'll be tipt the office and I'll be a marked man. Something will be missin' within the week from quarters where I've bin deliverin' coal, or kindlin', or the wash, and the somethin' — may be a goolden watch-case or a marked guinea — 'll be found in my kit, or bedding, and then it'll be the ladder in the riding-school with the farriers and their cats, and what is left o' me may rot in horspit'l awhile an' then — good-bye to poor Hymus!" he bowed his head and sobbed.

"Damme I'll cheat 'em!" he whispered hoarsely, "S'elp me bob, if I be to die I'll die my own way. Drowndin' is an easy finish, they say; there's wells about; there's the Foss, the river is handy. And I a ten years man with ne'er a mark agin my name! But, what is to be must be, seem'n'ly; but I seem to fare to wish that were over!"

I believe I flushed immensely and felt to the full such discomforts and inward reproaches as properly attend a mean action.

CHAPTER FIVE

I had conducted this unfortunate creature into a position of the unmost danger; to leave him in it was impossible: he had befriended me to his own undoing.

"My man," said I, "here are five-and-twenty pound notes. Take them; procure your discharge and find me at the *Black Swan* that is in Coney Street. As a private gentleman I shall need a servant, and I dare swear I shall find none better than yourself," and with that I tossed the money into his lap where he sate, and made haste from the room to escape the enormity of the poor wretch's gratitude.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER SIX

A FRIEND AT A PINCH

NEWS of my having sent in my papers made the round of the barracks in a trice, and being of the nature of a godsend to all beneath me in rank, secured me abundance of visitors during the short time of my further residence in quarters.

Under cover of asking my leave to contradict a rumour so injurious to my character, half the subalterns called upon me in turn, and each upon hearing his news confirmed, proposed in the most handsome manner to relieve me of my chargers, kit and barrack furniture, but owing to losses at play and delayed remittances, these young gentlemen could only offer prices very disproportionate to what these properties had cost me a month earlier.

So much, indeed, they admitted, one and all, genteelly and with feeling.

Now since a horse is a horse whether in His Majesty's service or in civil affairs, I saw no reason to sacrifice my stable.

My arms, uniforms and saddlery were another matter, and these exchanged hands at sums which aroused astonishment even in a mind so totally ignorant of values as my own.

I remember that these exchanges were not effected without some humorous passages: my visitors tendering promises or

CHAPTER SIX

notes of hand endorsed by persons outside the regiment, all, I was assured, of the utmost affluence, but not of my acquaintance.

I, upon my part, insisted upon money down. "Silly Suffolk, I am," thought I, "and these, no doubt, are the ways of Yorkshire, yet I am not to be wheedled out of my eye-teeth whilst awake and sober, either!"

Not that my friends were wholly deficient in a delicacy of a sort, for whilst my boots and uniforms were objects of no interest to such as were obviously shorter and slighter than I, yet the three or four young gentlemen who chanced to be of about my inches were everyone of them eager to purchase a kit — much of which had never been worn — not, look you, for their own use, but for friends — in other regiments.

My last minutes were disturbed by requests for drink-money from every man of the sergeants' mess who knew me by sight, and when these were satisfied and my horse stood at the door, I recall a couple of captains demanding settlement of wagers which I had not the faintest recollection of making upon some fight of which I had never heard.

These ultimate impositions I had spirit enough to resist, and, although the claimants talked loudly and looked big, something in my manner must have deterred them from pushing their business too impudently. They discovered that they had called at the wrong address and I heard them laughing as they descended the stair.

If I have dwelt too long and too minutely upon the incidents of my last hours as a commissioned officer in His Majesty's cavalry arm, my excuse must be that the events of the first crisis in my life are to this hour more sharply delineated upon the tablets of memory than later troubles and successes. We recall the first fence of a run, the first round of a fight, tho' subsequent obstacles and encounters decline to arrange themselves consecutively.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

I had borne myself with composure under the eyes of my comrades, but the load of my disaster weighed more heavily upon me every minute as I left my regiment behind. At the *Black Swan*, whither I repaired, it seemed to me that the ostler divined my trouble, that the boots had learned my disgrace, and I imagined myself an object of compassion to the plump and cleanly chambermaid. I shrunk from descending to the coffee-room, and was hard put to it to keep myself from yielding to a passion of tears.

Rallying my manhood with a promise of present action, I left my chamber and applied myself to the two preoccupations which increasingly possessed me.

The first of these was to provide myself with a friend by whose mouth to demand satisfaction from Captain Wallop and Lieutenant Ganthony. The second was to address to my father an account of the circumstances with which my readers are already familiar.

In placing these duties in this order I have followed the precedence and relative significance which they assumed at the time in my mind. But a singular difficulty opposed itself to the pursuit of my quarrel. I knew not a soul whom I could ask to carry my cartels.

To apply to a member of the mess from which I had been expelled was an ignominy from which I recoiled, yet beyond this vicious circle I was acquainted with no person of condition in the city or the three ridings.

The letters of commendation promised by my father had been forgotten or delayed, and, although there must have been gentlemen of the neighbourhood who would have been gratified with my acquaintance a few hours earlier on no better vouchers than my name and uniform, yet, having lost my service I shrank from foisting myself upon the one or two whose names stuck in my memory for no better reason than to embroil them in my

CHAPTER SIX

quarrel. So, having satisfied appetite with a cut off the cold sirloin and a tankard of stingo, finding progress impossible in one direction I essayed another, and called for pens and paper.

I confess to misgivings that the impression conveyed to you by the foregoing pages is sufficiently vague and diffuse, but, at its worst, it is clarity and conciseness compared with what would have been gathered from any account penned by me at the time.

My education, so far as it was literary, had ceased when I entered Eton, where the only useful accomplishments I acquired — I write in good faith after the lapse of over half a century — were the arts of cookery and self-defence. To prepare kidneys, toast and breakfast-coffee for the senior boy who fagged me, and to stand up to a heavier fellow and take punishment without flinching, were, I maintain, excellent accomplishments in their way, but, whether they could not have been acquired at less expense than my seven years in form entailed upon my father, is arguable.

Doubtless during those years a modicum of Latin and Greek passed through my mental system. I was in *Cornelius Nepos* when I went up and construed his *Miltiades* at sight to my tutor at our first interview, yet, two years after leaving Mr. Glassdale's house I turned to that same life in an idle hour and was mortified to find how little I could make of it.

Of history, geography, arithmetic and my mother tongue I learned nothing at my college, and forgot the little I took there, and during the past three years, spent with huntsmen and gamekeepers, I had seldom opened a book or cut a pen.

Thus, when my sheet was laid to my liking, sand and pen-knife disposed within reach, I dipped my quill and found myself at a stand.

A plain, straightforward tale of what I had endured and done would have afforded no very pleasant reading, but even

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

this was beyond my power, and the blotted scrawl which I at last achieved, ill-composed, worse-spelled and vilely written, was not calculated to soften a parent's displeasure at finding again upon his hands a son whom he had thought provided with an honourable profession.

The composition of this document cost me an infinity of pains, many contractions of the brows and hard breathing, much gazing at the ceiling for inspiration and such-like devices.

The coffee-room of the tavern was divided into stalls seated for four, the privacy of each secured by high partitions.

The winter's day being upon the wane and chilly, I had chosen a table which gave upon the hearth, and was thus myself open to observation from anyone using the chimney seats. One of these was occupied by a small elderly person neatly dressed in drab small-clothes, a long flapped waistcoat of parti-coloured stripe and a high-collared, bottle-green riding-coat with silver buttons.

The rain fell softly without and none passed in the street. The house lay empty and quiet, for the servants were at their meal. We two seemed the only guests the tavern entertained, and no wonder, for the season of year was unsuited to travel and the times unquiet.

He had hung his wig upon the newell of his settle; it was a small gray bob tied with a black riband, and had drawn one foot from its shoe to toast it at the log, moving the toes inside the stocking in enjoyment of the warmth. From time to time he shifted the long clay from the middle to the angle of his mouth, the better to observe me (as it struck me, puzzling my spelling with a roving eye). Nor was his scrutiny more unpleasant than that of the tavern cat upon his knee, for beside his evident age, sixty at the least, and his inoffensive littleness, the wholesome nut-brown cheek and humorous lines about the mouth drew me, and our eyes met more than once, when,

CHAPTER SIX

as I now remember, it was mine that dropt, finding a certain alert brightness in his which I saw no reason to stare down.

"Quarrel" was the word I had stuck at, finding it look wrong in every arrangement of letters after trial made upon the spoiled sheets, for I had not pleased myself at my first attempt. "Deuce take it!" quoth I under my breath, spelling it again in my head, my eye roving until, wholly unconsciously, it rested upon the bald noddle by the hearth.

"Two r's, monsieur!"

His answer to my unspoken question fell so patly that I fairly jumped.

"Yer pairdon is begged, monsieur — sir, I would say; ma remairk wass wholly invo-luntary: it escaipit me, it escaipit me!" He set down the cat gently and arose, making me a grave and courteous inclination, but I, still gaping upon him, stammered some smiling acknowledgment or other, and proceeded to enquire how in the name of wonder he knew the very word and letter that I was bogged at.

"'Tis a gift, young sir, a puir gift of my ain, and 'at times, a somewhat embairrassing one; tho' by yer pairteecular courtesy, not upon this occasion. But a'm thenking that my best amends wull be to place my puir sairvices at yer disposal."

My mind flew to my postponed demands for satisfaction, but as instantly rejected the possibility of despatching a cartel by so elderly and unmartial a second. I did not so much as open my lips, and had not framed my reply when for the second time I was forestalled.

"Let the cairtel wait, mon — sir, if ye wull pairmet me to advise. We wull return to that maitter later. With your pairmeesion a letter to a parent ('tis to yer father, I believe?) takes precedence."

Again I stammered assent; what else remained to do? It

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

was as when a novice meets a master at the chess; my move was divined before I touched the piece.

"Come, now, a bargain!" went on this remarkable little old fellow in his fine round, mellow voice with its strange Northern accent. "Here we encounter ane anither, twa gentlemen o' fortune, temporarily disengaged, and, as one may say, upo' neutral ground, for a tavern is free to all. We might maintain a courteous resairve, convairse on generals, or not at all; the coorse is pairmeesible and judeecious in war time. But I think better o' the occasion. Let us sairve ane anither turn and turn aboot in such capawcities as our several experiences suggest. To begin, regaird me as your deectionary; a time may come when ye may assist me (tho' aw'm thenking ye may escape me a'thegither unless I pit in ma claim airy, for noo that I regaird ye creetically, I micht vara weel ha bin ye father's father.") He chuckled, laid down his pipe, and extended a handsome snuff-box across the gangway in token of amity.

There was no rebuffing such shrewd kindness had I been so churlish as to attempt it. My story has shown already that I was a youth of an open and unsuspicious temperament with whom a senior of pleasant address readily got into touch. That this humorous and inoffensive stranger could harbour sinister designs did not cross my mind. Without friend or acquaintance within two hundred miles of me, I was feeling the need of sympathy keenly, and accepted the gentleman's good-natured advances for what they might be worth.

Yet, with the proper pride of youth I would not surrender the privacy of my affairs at the first summons, and taking him at his word, used him merely to supply the deficiencies of my orthography, suspecting the while that those remarkably penetrating hazel eyes were reading my thoughts like an open book.

The letter being signed and sealed, I thanked my new ac-

CHAPTER SIX

quaintance and had risen to seek the post master, when Hymus presented himself at the door of the apartment with news in his eye.

"Your servant, captain," quoth he, saluting.

"Await me outside," I answered, thinking it uncivil to bring a common fellow into a room reserved for gentlemen, but my fellow-guest interposed.

"By your leave, sir, have him in (if 'twas masel ye were conseddering). 'Tis wet outside, and I can always do with an honest soldier."

Arising, he resumed his shoe, adjusted his wig, and, taking his stand before the hearth, seemed in an instant to have added three inches to his stature. None would now have remarked upon his deficiency in height; the squared jaw, the firm, wide mouth, resolute glance, and easy, erect, poise of the man startled me.

"You are this gentleman's sairvant?" he enquired, taking the situation into his own hands and regarding my man keenly.

"I am, maj — *colonel*," replied Hymus, to my great astonishment, bringing his heels together smartly, and saluting with the exaggerated, stiff swing, at that time due to superior rank.

The figure before the hearth, erect now as a dart and instinct with martial dignity, returned the salute with an action so prompt, easy and gracious that my countenance fell, and conscious of some want of deference in my previous address, I arose.

"Sit, sir! Sit, I command! Yes, your fellow is right; trust an old trooper to detect the pipeclay! But it may be he has something for your private ear; ef so I retire; ef, on the other hand, I can advise you upon any trifling deeficulty, command me!"

"My dear sir — *colonel*," I began.

"Yes, if you will have it," — producing his card, "*Æneas Gunn, Colonel of the Stralsund Regiment, in the sairvice of*

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

His Majesty the King of Sweden." He raised a finger to his brow as he named his royal master.

"Then — then — then!" I stuttered and stopt, seeing my difficulties lessened.

"Yes, yes, yes!" he replied, smiling, acceding with a nod to my unspoken request, "but, all in good time; let us learn the posection of the enemy before we offer battle. Speak, my man, but first close the door; aw'm parteecular as to my defences."

"First, then, captain," said Hymus, "here be five o' yar pound notes. Praise be to God, and thanks to yew, I be a free man again!"

"But — but 'tis impossible! Your name will go up to the Horse Guards, and if ye get your discharge within a month you may think yourself devilish lucky!"

"On forlough meantime, captain; that's what come o' stan'nin well wi' the one gen'lman in the oficers' mess."

I stared.

"Senior major come back this arternoon, from leave (that was a-burying of his mother, they say), and he takes over the command quick sticks, C.O. bein' werry, werry bad wi' the blues. Row wi' yew, captain, they do say, his business; put the capstone on, in a manner o' speaking, for the fit have been due for a week."

"Anyways, captain, as soon as I found Major Dorset in command I just upped and sent my name along astin' for a word in private most partick'ler, and lays my case afore him as man to man. He's a man, yar honour, he is, and by yer leave, sir, is werry sorry for ye. 'The young gen'lman was too precip'tite, Hymus,' sez he, 'he were werry ill-advised.' 'Astin yer pardon, major,' sez I, 'he were never advised by nobody, there bein' ne'er a soul but yar honour to run to, and yew on leave!' 'An that's so,' sez he, 'and the milk's spilt, but 'tis dev'lish hard cheese for the young gen'lman, an' Gawd He knows,' sez

CHAPTER SIX

he, 'what my Lord Blakenham, his father'll say, and what discredit 'twill bring upon the mess.'"

These latter considerations recurred to me later, at the moment I was full of my immediate concerns and somewhat bewildered as to which to apply myself to first.

"Well, what's done is done," said I, as much to myself as to my company; "but what's to do next?"

"Let your man see to your horses and find himself lodgings," said Colonel Gunn, taking snuff.

MEMOIRS OF

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSIT

AS you will have foreseen, Colonel Gunn undertook to deliver my cartels.

He regarded the insults as too serious to be purged by any satisfaction short of the most drastic.

"We have our future to consedder," said he. "We are young and cannot afford to give away points. In fact, it behoves us to set such a stamp upon the circumstances that there shall be no taint o' ambiguity as to whaur we stood in the maitter, what passed, and how we cam oot o't.

"I have known some vara successful careers founded upon meetings such as these we are contemplating." He proceeded to furnish me with instances of the behaviour of young Scottish soldiers of fortune in affairs of honour; how a Mackay of his acquaintance had cut his way to royal favour with the sabre, and a cadet of the Sinclair family, a poor gentleman, by dint of sedulous practice with the hair-trigger had "shot up" into the highest and most exclusive circles in Stockholm.

One would have said that he accepted the duty with a kind of sober zest. In his own service, and in the land of his adoption, it is to be supposed that his rank had for long debarred him from interposing in the disputes of subalterns save in the capacity of president of a court of honour. Being here in

CHAPTER SEVEN

Britain on long leave with time upon his hands, and, so to say, *en garçon*, he embraced the opportunity of figuring again as a young fellow among young fellows, and trotted off to the barracks next morning upon my first charger, drest for the part and with Hymus for groom, the admired of every open-mouthed shopman in Coney Street.

It was a sleeveless errand: Captain Wallop being still by the surgeon's orders in a darkened room for concussion and injury to the eyes, was pronounced a non-combatant for the present.

"Whilk we must the mair regret, Mr. Fanshawe, as I learn that your regiment has got the route for Ireland and may march for Liverpool any day. These little differences, sir, are best settled promptly. It would be troublesome and chairgable for us to follow our friens to the Curragh — if I ha' the name o' their billet correctly — tho' we must certainly make the journey if needful."

"And the lieutenant?" I asked.

"Was oot, Mr. Fanshawe; I expeckit his return some twa hours, but found no encouragement to remain longer. I will do myself the pleasure of waiting upon him to-morrow."

I cried out upon the trouble I was giving him, but he made little of it, and having lunched in my company led me out, as he said, to see the sights of the city, a dull place with an intricacy of narrow cobbled streets overhung by ancient timbered houses, and a prodigious number of churches, of which those that elsewhere would be reckoned notable are so overshadowed by neighbourhood to the minster as to seem below their merits.

This erection, the cathedral church, or minster, is a monstrous pile in the barb'rous Gothic taste, which yet by its complexity and vastness so imposes upon the beholder that he would not wish it otherwise though sensible of its defects.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

All its stone-work is subdued to a uniform mellow tint of age which varies with the changes of the seasons and the positions of the sun. More especially at sunset, as I had many opportunities of observing later, do the twinn'd towers of its western front take on the softest and most surprising reflections of pink and orange.

But to our business. The colonel and I had reached, as I remember, that end of the Market Square known as The Pavement, when I perceived two persons in the act of turning into a tailor's shop, in the taller of whom I recognised Lieutenant Ganthony and in the shorter a fellow officer, one Cornet Meeking.

Communicating what I had seen to my companion, I left him to take what measures he thought proper, and was seeking my lodging to await his report, when a passing shower drove me into the coffee-room of a neighbouring hostelry. Chusing a secluded corner, I studied a stained and crumpled news-sheet and possessed my soul with such patience that the stuffiness of the room, or the refreshment which I ordered for the good of the house, so wrought with me that I nodded and presently slept.

I had not taken matters so easily had there remained anything upon which I could employ myself, but conceiving that all was done which lay with me to do, the anxieties and emotions of the previous few days assailed me and I yielded to their importunities, something inappropriately in my choice of place as will presently appear.

The doze may have lasted a matter of five minutes, though I had the sensation of having slept for hours and traversed a hundred leagues, when, hearing myself named, I sat up with the answer upon my lips which we gave at Eton when school was called.

My reply, if it were articulate, aroused no attention, for the

CHAPTER SEVEN

reason that three persons unseen, to whom I myself was invisible, were discussing my affair so earnestly as to drown all voices save their own.

"D—n it all, Meeking!" cried a voice I knew, "I will have sabres; I am the insulted party!"

"My G—d, Ganthony, will ye leave it to me, or won't ye?"

"Of course I leave it to ye, you're my second, arn't ye? But still—"

"Pairmet me to obsairve, Mr. Meeking, that your prencipal's presence here is pairfectly irregular."

"All right; I am off. But remember, Meeking, I'll not meet him with pistols; d'ye hear?"

"Very well, if you must have it so, but the man knows nothing of the sabre."

"Ye wull excuse me, Cornet Meeking, but this is *not* 'very well,' and we do *not* agree to your condections, and," continued the colonel's voice, its provincial accent growing more pronounced, "we most aibolutely, and entirely, and finally rebut the assairtion that ye are the insultit pairty. The blows, whilk were not all given by one side, were given in *our* quarters, whaur 'twill puzzle ye to explain your intrusion at midnight (let alone the company ye brocht wi' ye), and —"

("Stuff!" interrupted Ganthony.)

"—if ye *are* the insultit party, hoo comes it, Mr. Meeking, that 'tis *we* that have to pursue ye, and waylay ye to obtain satisfaction? No, sir, I will *not* attend till ye, but I am bound to tell ye I am finding yer pree-sence and yer carriage a deeficult maitter to stomach. Once more, Mr. Meeking —"

"Break it off, Meekie; the Fifth can pick and chuse, 'tis too great a condescension! And as for you, Mr. Thingumbob, I'll just bid ye good day, for I haven't the honour of knowing

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

anyone in your beggarly service, and, now I come to think on 't, we've only your own word for 't —"

"Sir!"

"— that ye're not some lousey Scots adventurer."

There was gunpowder in the air; I leapt to my feet with an instinct for what should follow and but just in time to see the little colonel administer so fervent a box upon the ear of his insulter that the tall dragoon, who was standing, leapt back, trode upon a spittoon and stumbled, and on recovery, finding himself wholly unable to meet the formidable eye and onset of the old lion he had aroused, turned a shoulder in retreat. Down upon that shoulder whistled the colonel's riding wand. "Ah!— Yah!— Damnation!" yelled the recipient of this courtesy, and clapping a gloved hand to the place and executing a rapid "threes' about," made for the open door pursued by his puny enemy.

Meeking and I ran to the window and beheld the discomfited lieutenant driven across the wet cobblestones into the narrow entrance of the shambles, receiving a round half-dozen sounding stripes ere he distanced his pursuer.

In half a minute Colonel Gunn re-entered the room, he had adjusted his wig and cuffs and regained the fine dry precision of manner which the foregoing interlude had momentarily ruffled. Bowing to the cornet, who stood the image of dismay, "Your sairvant, Mr. Meeking," said he: "I mek you every apology due from a gentleman to a gentleman for sae abruptly breaking our colloquy. Ye wull notice that I forbore the fallow longer than was maybe conseestent with my honour; that only — only under the extremity of provocation, did I inflect the pairsonal chastisement whilk his insolence demand-it."

Young Meeking mumbled something unintelligible, and the small warrior, perceiving the lad's distress, proceeded in tones

CHAPTER SEVEN

of the most exquisitely modulated politeness (as tho' a game-cock should suddenly droop his hackles and coo like a turtle), "If, sir, it should occur to ye — or to the gentlemen o' yer honourable mess — (to whom ye will not fail to give a pairfeckly unvairnished vairsion o' the affair), that I exceeded my rights in the maitter o' punishment, I would pray ye to consedder for your own pairt, and to rapresent to your friens, that although I seldom reply to a pairsonal inciveelity with mair than a single stripe, yet, upo' this occasion I refleckit that the fallow had insultit my sairvice and my nation as well as masel. Sax skelps, I thenk; I doot na mair than sax, wass it?"

Meeking agreed hastily and unreservedly that six was the precise number, and was ready to take oath that the colonel had bestowed neither more nor less, nor exceeded by the smallest degree the necessities of the case. He then accepted a pinch from the little old gentleman's box ("Presentit to me by Marshall Keith, sirs"), and took his leave as promptly as was possible, being escorted to the door by my friend, hat in hand, who impressed his address upon him, assuring him of the pleasure he would feel in hearing from him at his lodging that evening or on the morrow.

"Our more immediate beesiness must be defairred," said he, "for it has been held that a prencipal who so far forgets himself as to insult his adversary's second must give saitisfaiction to the second before meeting the oreeginal adversary." And to this Meeking agreeing, with many inclinations and expressions of politeness, made his escape.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER EIGHT

I GIVE MY PROOFS

IT is time for me to wind up these trivial and involved incidents which seemed so important at the moment, and so nearly to touch my honour, but which hardly affect the story of my life.

No regimental mess could ignore what had passed had its individual members been never so complaisant. The city was buzzing with six different versions of the caning, and at least as many reasons for its infliction, some of which coming to the ears of the acting commandant afforded him excuse for action. Though in the midst of the engagements and annoyances incidental to changing quarters, he, as a man of honour, solicitous for the good name of his command, insisted that satisfaction should be given and demanded according to the circumstances.

I had, therefore, the honour of acting as second to Colonel Gunn in his affair with Lieutenant Ganthony.

It would appear that the Fifth had become notorious for early morning expeditions of a hostile nature. The country people had grown inconveniently curious as to the movements of hackney coaches in the lanes and field-roads in the vicinity, more especially in the directions of Knavesmire and Hob Moor — the favourite *rendezvous*.

CHAPTER EIGHT

This being represented to me by the second on the other side, and all grounds being equally acceptable to my principal and to myself, it was agreed that the affair should be settled on Clifton Ings, an extensive meadow, or common, beside the river at some distance above the city.

The morning was dark and wet. We breakfasted by candle-light, and having over-night secured the services of a surgeon, called for a coach and picked him up in Lendal. The drive was long and chilly, the coach damp and smelling of mildew; the surgeon, a young man, yawned incessantly, and excused himself upon the score of having sat up all night with a patient.

The colonel was uniformly cheerful and even jocose, and held me in conversation until we left the road, and by the rolling of the coach seemed upon softer and less even ground.

Here we found the other party awaiting us, cloaked figures in a greyiness of fog and wet, with two coaches dimly visible in the background, their horses lost in steam.

But although we had kept our appointments the river had been beforehand with us: a flood was rising every minute and so little of the green remained uninvaded, and that so plashy underfoot, that upon hasty consultation I concurred in a change of ground, and getting inside again and bidding our driver keep the others in sight, we presently found ourselves upon a dryer and smaller pasture enclosed by high thorn hedges, which, as I think, they called Bootham Stray.

I had observed whilst following our leaders that we ourselves were followed by the third coach.

The cause of quarrel being of an aggravated nature the distance was agreed at ten paces. At his first fire my principal disabled his man, lodging a ball in his right forearm, and although we most obligingly offered to continue the duel with our left hand, the regimental surgeon refused his sanction and honour was declared satisfied.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

During this encounter the lieutenant carried himself with more firmness than I had given him credit for. Ten paces is an unpleasant proximity; one can see, as it were, half-way down the barrel of one's opponent's pistol. Ganthony was plainly one of the many who can walk through a difficult part with due preparation, but lack the ready spirit needed for emergency, and this was the colonel's view as expressed subsequently: "The man may be a brave enough fellow, but is no soldier."

This being the first affair in which I had assisted in any capacity, or indeed had witnessed, I was nervously anxious to bear myself with becoming decorum, and at this juncture was gratified to see my principal turn to me with a nod of commendation.

"And now, Mr. Fanshawe, we exchange capawceeties. 'Tis impossible for either of us to pursue our quarrel with our man, there, for the present at least. Let it stand so: and for the other maitter, pairmet me."

He crossed the ground, hat in hand in the rain, and was presently closely engaged with the senior major, who, with Captain Wallop, had occupied the third coach; the acting commandant having taken this stringent means of securing the presence of a gentleman who was less anxious to afford satisfaction than is usual in his profession.

We heard later that he had malingered until his injuries, or rather disfigurements, had been adjudged insufficient excuse for declining to meet me.

The first affair had been despatched in comparative privacy, but the shots brought to the ground a company of lads and idle persons who closed in upon us the better to see (the weather growing increasingly thick and the rain heavier), until my own matter bade fair to be settled under the eyes of a crowd.

Duels are now much less the mode then they were fifty or

CHAPTER EIGHT

sixty years since, and I doubt if any of my younger relatives have been, or ever will be, called upon to give their proofs; in which change of public practice I unreservedly concur. It may therefore amuse you to learn from my pen the sensations of a youth upon the ground for the first time.

I believe that I was in no degree sensible of fear, but experienced a certain dryness of the throat and mouth, and as I remember, a remarkable clearness of vision and heightening and intensifying of the faculties, accompanied by a nervousness as to how I should comport myself, very similar to the anxieties which assail a young rider at the covert-side during the moments before reynard breaks. His doubts as to the behaviour of his horse, his misgivings as to the length of his stirrups and the tightness of his girths, are much akin to what were mine, and, just as these anxieties vanish when hounds have settled to their line, and his steed, bounding strongly beneath him, has challenged the first fence, so my tremors passed when the colonel, having placed me and retired, the major-commandant addressed us: "Gentlemen, are you ready? At the third word, if you please; ready, present, *fire!*"

Through the thin smoke I saw Wallop's hat shift and fall. Simultaneously I was aware that one of the bystanders had struck me above the knee with a stone. This was my impression, and only the growing red stain upon my breeches dispelled my indignation and convinced me that I was hit.

Feeling neither smart nor weakness I turned to Colonel Gunn, who was approaching, demanding a second exchange.

"Ye ha' chippit him, mon!" he was saying, and, hearing some coarse expressions, I glanced at my opponent and saw him holding a discoloured handkerchief to his head and stamping with much energy.

The colonel watched him keenly. "'Tis naething! ye fired high; did I no tell ye? But, hello!" He beckoned our surgeon,

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

and a sudden dimness overcoming me, I accepted their arms and was laid upon my back upon a cloak.

When I recovered my consciousness, which I did almost immediately, I found the major waiting to make his adieux. He used some handsome expressions, being pleased to compliment me upon my bearing under exceptionally trying circumstances, hoping for my quick recovery, and expressing his sorrow that my services were (as he feared) lost to the regiment.

I was assisted to my coach and so handled by a nervous and inexperienced surgeon, that what between loss of blood from the slipping of the ligature, and too copious doses of stimulant, I reached my lodging in a very light-headed condition. I remember the concern and anger of Hymus, who helped to carry me to my bed. I recall the tears of one of the maids, and later, the twinges incidental to the extraction of the ball.

A confused movement of kettledrums and trumpets completes the impressions of the day; a regimental march throbbed in my heavy head in an interval of stupor. This, had I known it, was the farewell of the Fifth, their band playing them through the city on their way to Liverpool to take their full share in the disasters and disgraces of the most disgraceful and cruel campaign in which the British arms have been engaged since the surrender of Yorktown.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER NINE

I CEASE FROM BEING A MASTER

I RETAIN but indistinct recollections of the week which succeeded the misadventures related in the previous chapter.

Evincing fever, I was thrice bled: a practice founded rather upon custom than reason, and frequently abused, as in the case of the lamentable demise of his royal highness the late Duke of Kent, whom an ignorant practitioner deprived of ninety ounces of blood and his life at the same time.

In my own instance, a healthy system, suffering from nothing in the world but hæmorrhage, was artificially subjected to more upon a tradition attributed to Galen, and a treatment by rule-of-thumb that any old wife would have scouted to the door if allowed to exercise her native mother-wit, but which the faculty of the day grovelled to, as savages worship a fetich the more devoutly if their idol be both ugly and useless!

At the week's end, being set in a chair and released from my bandages, I bade adieu to my good friend Colonel Gunn, whose journey into the wilds of Scotland, delayed, as I believe, upon my account, might no longer be postponed.

He furnished me with an address in the county of Sutherland, in Armadale, "Nor-east o' the Reay-country and Strath Naver," as he described it, but whilst professing his own and

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

his friends' desire to entertain me at any time and for as long as my leisure could endure their solitudes, he delicately hinted that the receipt of letters was almost unknown in that region, and interdicted as well by the delays due to the absence of service and of high-roads as by its extreme expense.

"Come unannounced, my dear sir!" he exclaimed, whilst holding my hand at parting, and then, reseating himself, must needs apprise me of the circumstances of his family.

"The Gunns" (said he) "are but a small clan, but loyal gentlemen to a man, and (though 'tis I that say it) naiturally hospeetable; in this respect wholly unlike some other names, of which I may mention" (said he) "the McLeods of Assynt, a family that lies under the curse of God and man, sir, for the black deed o' theirs that doubtless ye know of and whilk I will not defile my lips wi' parteecularizing."

Like most Englishmen of that time, I was both ignorant of, and indifferent to, the divisions, differences and histories of the Scottish people. The genius of the Great Unknown has since measurably corrected this apathy, but I must confess myself still uncertain as to the precise circumstance adumbrated by my kind old friend. He may have referred to the betrayal of the Marquess of Montrose to his enemies by the Master of Ardvroik, a scandalous affair during the troubles of the seventeenth century.

Well, the gallant old Scots gentleman was gone, bowing himself out of my chamber with a punctilious ceremony which embarrassed whilst it gratified me, and which I now suspect he considered due as well to my misfortunes as to my having been under fire.

With him departed the last of my good luck. An hour later a letter was placed in my hands bearing my father's frank and seal.

And now, what shall I say? It would ill become me to permit

CHAPTER EIGHT

any unfilial expressions to fall from my pen. The experiences of the many years which have passed since I broke that seal have done little for me if they have failed to give me sympathy with the just resentment of a bitterly disappointed parent.

Suffice it that my lord having conceived the worst possible opinion of my motives and conduct, (by whom misled I care not to suggest, and never knew for a surety,) and naturally holding me responsible for the frustration of the hopes he had placed in my military career, addressed me in the severest terms, forbade me his presence and his house, and, indeed — (as I interpreted his letter) — cast me off.

As I was afterwards to learn my unfortunate parent, when he thus writ me, had other distresses upon him than those for which he held me responsible. Judgment had just been given against him in the suit with the Maskelyne-Fanshawes, the younger branch of our family, a litigation inherited from his grandfather's uncle; and not only did extensive estates pass from his hands, but he found the residue of his property charged with accumulated costs of eighty-five years of proceedings in Chancery. Simultaneously, since misfortunes seldom come singly, changes in the Ministry of which he was a subordinate member, compelled his resignation of the Paymastership of the Court of Wards, a sinecure which he had fondly supposed to be a life grant.

Whilst he thus found himself straitened upon both sides, my precipitate acceptance of my enemies' terms bade fair to entail the forfeiture of the purchase money invested in my commission, as well as to attach a blemish to my personal character. These dangers he set himself to avert by the employment of influence at the Horse Guards, judging (as he wrote me), that my own evidence, if no better expressed than the letter I had sent him, would stand me in no stead either in a court martial or a court of honour, at either of

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

But I could stoop no lower. A rebel, my heart was hot within me at the harshness and injustice with which I conceived myself to have been treated by her, the indulgent and doting parent, the only woman I had ever loved, and to whom I had never before appealed in vain.

My brother, Lord Bramford, it did not occur to me to approach. My senior by four years, his position as heir expectant to the title and estates had always set him upon an eminence above me in the eyes of the household, as well as in his own. To our father he was everything; I nothing: his allowance and equipage had for years been upon a separate scale. He had sat for my mother's pocket-borough of Alderley upon his coming of age; had run horses, contracted debts, was a member of five clubs, and had been presented at Court, had gone the round of a dozen country seats, and now, after the manner of the young bloods of his age, kept chambers in town, entertained his friends and moved in a world aloof from my rustic stupidities. Nor was he endeared to me by his one honourable trait, an obstinate but hopeless suit to our neighbour, the Marquise de la Rochemesnil, a lady some years his senior.

Doubtless I was jealous of him; he coolly ignored me. We seldom met, and had I supposed him in possession of spare means (and I supposed nothing so improbable) I did not imagine for a moment that he would consider his brother a proper object for his charity.

Once again I had myself, and myself only, to depend upon; myself this time divested of the adventitious aids of blood, military rank or ready money.

This time I was reduced to a pair of bare hands, as I told myself; and spent much of the following day, a Sunday, in excellent resolutions in the Minster transept.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TEN

AND BECOME A MAN

ON the Monday, having sold or pawned every unnecessary article I possessed, even to my case of pistols, I dressed myself in my stoutest and plainest, rolled a change of linen in my cloak, filled my pockets with bread and cheese, paid my score and took the road to seek my fortune.

In short, my cogitations upon the coach after leaving Huntingdon had recurred to me, and I would employ myself about horses if such employment were to be had. But not in the streets of a city through which I had pranced as a cavalier; that humiliation I spared myself.

Before leaving the ancient city I made the last of my many applications at the post-office. With what recurrent sicknesses of heart had my previous visits been attended! The faint hopes with which I had been wont to watch the postmaster a-sorting his budget of stale letters had ever been followed by the anger of disappointed love. Not a line from my mother! Now, at the last there came a rift in my grey sky. The man frowned reflectively, wetted his thumb and passed me a letter through the wicket. My breath thickened: it bore my father's frank, but the address was neither in my lord's nor my mother's hands. I broke seal impatiently

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

without a glance at the impress; it was from my friend the marquise.

“MY DEAR MR. GEORGE, ‘What is this that I hear?’”

Thus she began, and it was plain that the lady had heard little good of me. I scented reproach, and stiffened. Mixed with delicate upbraiding was an allusion to some trouble of which the writer evidently supposed me to be already apprised. I was bidden to lighten my father’s burden and pished restively, supposing the trouble to be my own misfortune. In short I took it all awry. I now believe that the letter was not only wisely but kindly conceived, if something too elder-sisterly in tone. It closed with encouragement, but Lucille would have me make my submission; I must write. Had I not written?—yes! and written! I made no allowances for mail robberies, the delays and mischances of the road, carelessness of servants or absence of my parents from home; no, nor perceived, as I might have done from the date of the letter I held in my hand, that it had lain in the post-master’s pigeon-hole for near two months, and antedated three of my five appeals for justice. Had the marquise been at my side in bodily presence I doubt not but that she might have bent me to anything she willed, such was her power of persuasion and command. Being two hundred miles away she failed. Resenting her interference, I tore the letter in bitterness, and shaking the dust of York from my feet, started upon my travels, and, as all the routes were the same to me, the evening of my second day upon the road found me with the towers of Ouseby Abbey in view.

It was a Wednesday in March and some time after sunset when I came in sight of the last milestone, and having been for two days disappointed of adventures, saw possibilities in the erratic behaviour of a pony-cart ahead of me. The vehicle being of a dusty yellow and hung about with two or three

CHAPTER TEN

wicker baskets, declared itself the property of a mealman, but the zigzag course preferred by its driver seemed more suited to a jovial tavern-keeper. The brute between the shafts was capable of reaching home had the beast between the baskets been sober enough to permit him. As things stood, or rather oscillated, the ditch bottom rather than the stable bade fair to be their night's resting place.

From this I saved them by catching at the bit and leading the nag despite the jerking and swearing of the man. Whilst achieving so much, I failed in preventing collision with the mile stone against which we brought up with a shock that threw the driver over his wheel upon his head, and detached one of the baskets, which upon reaching the ground discharged itself of some two pound's worth of heavy pence and thin silver.

The fellow lay still enough, and the nag being equally passive, I hastily gathered the coin into my handkerchief, knotting the corners for safety and bestowing it in the cart. This done I offered help to the man. He was wholly uninjured, having fallen, as the drunk so commonly fall, with inexplicable immunity, and seemed, if possible, more comically mazed than before his tumble. Who he was, for whom he drove, and whither he would go, had escaped his memory. Being incapable of regaining his seat he accepted my arm, and I leading the horse, in this order we reached the little town at nightfall.

Here we were accosted by an anxious pair, a tall woman and a short man, evidently scouting and expectant. Upon us they pounced with a "Gracious goodness! what an object!" and glanced from my companion to myself and back again, and at one another with silent suspicions ere the woman found a severe tongue.

"Well, Obed, ye've had enough this time, anyhow!" To which the toper replied with placid contentment,

"Right y'are, Missus, I have; thank the Lord!"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"An' where's your money?" asked the man, with a shake in his voice, addressing his servant but regarding me sidelong.

"Are ye Mr. Jabez Medcalf?" I asked, for this name was upon the shaft.

"Why, yes; and I say, young man, d'ye happen to know what this man o' mine has done wi' his money?"

I made over the contents of the basket, reclaiming my handkerchief and stating where and how I had recovered the coin from the highway. Little passed until we reached a shop, where, the cash being told and found correct, the couple were at leisure to breathe freely.

Obed, hopelessly bemused, was handed over to a thin, discouraged wife, who accepted his condition without surprise.

"Take him away, dame; 'tis the last time. We're done wi' 'im," said the mistress, and then turning to me held a light to my face, and after some steady and rather embarrassing scrutiny, made herself the spokeswoman for the firm.

Was I tramping for work? I was. Was I used to horses? Few more. Did I understand the trade of a mealman? There I was wanting, and but for the seriousness of my case and my importunate stomach, could have laughed outright at the absurdity of the question propounded to an oppidan, but lately a carabineer, and still, by the grace of God, the son of an earl.

I must suppose that my face spoke for me; my manifest honesty and willingness, and perhaps the absence of any competitor, stood me in stead, and I was there and then installed as driver, shopman, porter, and handy-man within doors and without for my board, lodging, and some few shillings the week.

My service began forthwith; there stood a cob to be unharnessed, rubbed down, baited and bedded. There, too, a cart to be brushed and housed, harness to be hung and baskets to be bestowed. To it I went, stripping to the first work to which,

CHAPTER TEN

as I think, I had ever set my hand, and only when all was done was I bidden wash myself at a bucket and join my mistress at the supper-board. I was sharp-set, but a long and solemn grace intervened, such a grace as I had never imagined, nor did this complete the religious exercise of the household, the meal concluding with some ten minutes of family worship, during which I fell asleep across my stool from bodily weariness.

Here, and in this unforeseen manner I became an inhabitant of the small town which I have called Ouseby (for I desire not to wound the susceptibilities of survivors, if such there be, of those whom I knew in other years and in other circumstances). The little town comes back to me as I write, its serpentine ground-plan, its ancient house-fronts and shops with half-doors, approached, some by steps up from the cobbles of the street, some by steps down, few indeed upon the level; the half-ruinous priory church, the tanyards and bark-sheds, the long garden-strips and pightles of pasture at the backs. These I recall, and the hollow water-meadow where once, it is said, the Ouse ran, the Dane's Ditch and other reliques of old times. But it is of its people I am to speak, and of their various ways of dealing with one another and with myself, a stranger, during my months of sojourn.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

That I was in a state of nature was plainly seen, and I saw no reason to deny so evident a proposition.

That a state of nature is likewise a state of sin was a corollary I could accept in general terms. But the reasoning went further, and presently became alarmingly personal in its application.

Thus, my state of sin was a state of danger, since the wages of sin is death. I found myself a vessel of wrath; under a curse; a stranger to and an enemy of my maker; trifling upon the brink of eternity without assurance, warrant or claim, and with only the pit of the damned for my portion in the world to come.

The zeal, the power and the feeling with which these people, and especially my mistress, wrought with me, made no small impression. With her as expositor I read the Book of the Revelation for the first time, and felt my inwards moved by its drear terrors. When words failed they fell back upon the resources of music.

"Listen, Georgel!" she would say, and then, "Jabez, let us sing Bourne and Sanders, fifteen,—

*"Why do I wander from my God
Whose greatness none can tell?
Can I endure His vengeful rod,
And bear the pains of hell?"*

*"Eternal darkness I must see,
And hope will never come;
But fiends will my companions be,
And hell will be my home."*

or it might be Mr. Charles Wesley's masterpiece, —

*"Shall I, amidst a ghastly band,
Dragged to the judgment seat,
Far on the left with horror stand,
My fearful doom to meet?"*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Thus exhorted, thus prayed with and even wept over, I was shaken out of the careless good conceit of myself and blind confidence in a rosy future so common in youth, and fell into so depressed and fearful a state that I dreaded to descend a ladder, and fell asleep in anticipation of awakening in the place of torment.

I conceived — upon what grounds I know not — that I was guilty of mortal sin, that my case was gone already beforehand to judgment, and I condemned to an eternity of fire and brimstone.

That I should remain for one hour in this pitiable illusion was very far from the wish of my master and mistress, who held out to me day by day the plan of salvation, pointing me to the Strait Gate and the Open Door, and urging me to accept the sacrifice of Christ, come from under the law and shout Hallelujah!

Of their own salvation, present and ultimate, they were as assured as they were of their existence. No doubt seemed ever to approach either. If (as at times befell) my master slipt, for he was by nature a sociable creature, 'twas but a fall from grace, amended as soon as admitted, and he was once again in a state of sonship, accepted, washed and pardoned.

You are to understand that these searchings of heart, fears, hopes and agonies were as new to me as some strange disease for which I knew neither name, palliation, nor remedy, and to which I felt a victim ere I was aware of my danger.

I suppose that a youth bred in a society which discussed serious topics to some purpose would have had a mind sufficiently furnished for the comparison of doctrine.

Of this I was wholly incapable, lacking the elements for forming a judgment; for, to begin, the Bible which I distantly venerated I had never willingly opened. To doubt or belittle this holy (but neglected) volume would have seemed to

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

me akin to blasphemy; yet it was this book, now newly displayed to me, that, like some august and terrible arsenal, supplied the texts which smote upon and shrivelled my spirit.

My breeding stood me in small stead. The childish bed-time prayers, learned by rote, I had disused since entering Eton, where, as I think, we were as arrant young pagans as any in this world, and our tutors no better.

The Vicar of Bramford, a Mr. Bellasis, a pluralist with some three livings beside, was a college friend of my father's and, as I suppose, neither better nor worse than others of his class at that day. He was at least a gentleman, with a gentleman's tastes and habits; his weight permitted him to see the death of more foxes than any man in the country side. Although never known to have laid a guinea upon a race, he was held to be the shrewdest judge of a running-horse in East Suffolk, and had repeatedly foretold the future success of unpromising colts.

He could tie a fly, dub a cock, was an excellent farrier, and played sound whist with perfect temper.

The man was kindly, and, according to his means, open-handed if peremptory to his poor, and was trusted by my parents as their almoner.

All this I record in his favour — more I cannot. Possibly as a result of a breeding like my own, he was as destitute of religion as his horse. His brief sermons, read stumbingly from borrowed manuscripts, were barely audible in the deep hall pew behind the stone chancel-screen wherein I played cat's-cradle whilst my parents slumbered.

Upon none of his parishioners, so far as I am aware, did he feel it incumbent to impress the need of a personal faith, which I can only suppose he had never experienced.

As to the household which I knew best, my honoured parents conceived their duty towards their Maker to consist

CHAPTER ELEVEN

in a correct behaviour, open hospitalities, adequate charities, and an appearance at one service on the Sunday when residence and weather permitted.

This politely incurious but deferential attitude towards the Unseen was the tone of good society, falling as far below the hearty piety of the good old King as it was superior to the excesses of the Jacobins his enemies.

That my parents were blameworthy, or even remiss, I will not admit: they, and their spiritual adviser, lived according to their lights, and after the custom of their order. Their Maker, not their descendant, is their Judge. May He who created them mercifully weigh the uses made of the opportunities He gave.

Let me get back to my own case.

We have all of us had experience of the painful effects of severe toil upon unused muscles; somewhat similar are the consequences of thought, meditation, reasonings and prayer upon a mind totally unversed in these exercises. At this time I was suffering both bodily and spiritually from over-strained faculties, and was so far fortunate that I could play off one disease against another.

By day I was able in some degree to detach my mind from the cloud which hung upon it by giving myself entirely to my labour. Although utterly unskilled in the aptitudes of my employment, unable even to tie the mouth of a sack with the proper knot, or to strike off a bushel with accuracy, yet driven by my terrors as by whips, I so toiled as to excite first the admiration and then the fears of my employers.

When out with the cart I would make a friend and a confidant of the horse, singing, conversing, or rather monologising to this dumb companion by the hour, the better to escape the two stern-faced angels who attended me, the one forever showing me the doom of the sinner, the other, softer faced, bidding me make one more dutiful appeal to my mother.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWELVE

VISITORS AND RESIDENTS

TWICE it happened, on days whilst the cob was resting from a journey, and I about the place, that I was bidden to stand by the horse of the miller paying his monthly call for orders and money. This Mr. Ellwood was one of the people called Quakers, a man widely known and as widely respected; a diligent person in his business who covered much country upon his rounds, driving himself in a high-wheeled gig drawn by a blood mare better at going than standing. Hence, whilst he was in the shop with my mistress, I would be at his mare's head, rubbing her velvet muzzle and looking into her great wild eye with its moving, deep-set spark of red fire, for I ever loved a horse. Upon both occasions there was something in the gig still better worth the looking at, for his daughter, a young girl (a young lady I may surely call her, and why not?) accompanied her father upon his journey. She used the lower seat beside his raised box, wrapped in her rug and tippet, her little fresh, grave face framed in a small poke bonnet (as at Tadcaster, and again at York).

This little face drew me as a far-off sparkle of light draws the eye in the dusk. It was not full-cheeked and bouncing like some young girls' faces, nor square-chinned, nor peaked, but,

CHAPTER TWELVE

as I told myself, shaped exact like a pea-fowl's egg, precisely as it should be, perfect in modelling and line, tint and texture, just a fine, clear pallour, touched to an inward pink by the wind.

So much I dared to see, peering through the mare's mane as she shook her head and shifted feet.

But beside these general excellencies I learned to know her small red lips, which she kept so closely pressed the one upon the other, and her great frank grey eyes.

Always she leaned softly as in thought, or it might be somewhat sleepy with the wash of fresh air, or wearied, for they had driven far.

Twice, I say, I rendered the child this distant service, standing bare-armed as I had left my work. "Service," I had written, but such service is near kin to worship, and, as I stood thus seeing, but, as I thought, myself unseen, or unremarked, I studied every pure lineament of that little face, and found an interest therein that was new to my life.

There was no maid in Ouseby, were she Churchwoman or Methodist, at whom I had looked thrice. Good girls there must have been, fine women, wholesome and desirable, I doubt not, but at the time I had no eyes for such. Nor had I left my heart in Suffolk. I was of the kind that furnish late and my love passages were all before me; such boyish flames as had flickered out in my teens having been all for women far beyond my years, mature and majestic spinsters whom I had eyed shyly from safe distances. Nor can I think that my six feet odd of shambling uncouthness, blushes and tied tongue, were framed to captivate the sex.

No, I knew not the flavour or relish of love, and feeling forforn in myself, cast down and ill-placed, and needing something better and finer than I could find within me, I thought it no sin or unworthiness to set that little face, so innocently

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

sweet, in a chamber of my heart by itself, there to visit in silence for private delectation and refreshment.

"I know not so much as her name," said I, "nor am I ever like to know. Nor does she know mine, nor look upon me save as upon any other chaw-bacon that stands to her father's horse at his houses of call. I harm her not. She helps me. I feel the goodness and holiness of this young child. God bless her: would I were like her. If, as seems my doom, I miss Heaven, I will carry the remembrance of her little face to the pit of hell, and think of it and her through all eternity."

Then her father would come forth, thank me with the cordial gravity that was his natural manner, and I would return to my toil. And this was my fourth sight of her.

You will be wondering what I did with myself in so quiet a place as "Crooked Ouseby." Quiet it certainly was: no stage passed within five miles of it, nor did any inhabitant, save the rector, take the *News*. The weekly arrival of this link with the outer world — regarded in ordinary times as a fashionable extravagance — was in those days of unrest eagerly watched for, and the great man found his morning walk waylaid by curious neighbours whose ignorance it pleased him gravely to play upon. As thus: "News? Master Piper; Why, surely here are strange news, the Dutch have taken Holland!"

"Never, surely, rector. Well, I s'pose we's bahn to turn 'em oot o' thot!"

That I was dull I will not admit, for my hours of labour beginning before sunrise (during the spring), and ending only when the work was done, left me little time upon my hands.

Upon the Saturday night, like other young men of my age, I was used to repair to my public house, *The Angel*, an inn which I chose not for any merit of cleanliness, or for the goodness of its ale, but because its sign recalled a house near to our

CHAPTER TWELVE

park gates at Bramford (which you too will remember).

Here I was used to sit out the evening with pipe and pot, and had grown too fond of both before I was 'ware of my declension. Two circumstances (under Providence) brought me to my senses, and the recital of the former may interest my young relatives as displaying the manners of the place and time.

In Ouseby were fourteen taverns and inns, of which perhaps half were of standing to support a drinking club. It was from the staunchest toppers of the strongest clubs in Ouseby that a certain eleven was picked to encounter a like number of seasoned toss-pots of Selby, Goole, Tadcaster, or Church Fenton.

The way of these bouts was as follows: a letter of challenge being sent and accepted, the contest was held upon neutral ground, in the presence of sworn umpires and a referee. Every man of each eleven had to take off his half-pint of the strong ale, or stingo, used in Yorkshire, at the word of command, until one by one, the contestants slid from their seats to the floor, and the last surviving tippler claimed the victory and the stakes for his club.

These matches were laid and wagered upon for a month in advance, and watched with the keenest interest, and reported of with zest, though sufficiently beastly exhibitions as you may suppose, and as I had occasion to observe.

As was but natural, these doughty fellows, though men of great size, the goodliest colours and noble proportions, were very uncertain lives, and the turney champion of the pewter was apt to drop suddenly in the midst of his jollity.

It was upon the eve of one such contest, I forget which, but think it was between Ouseby and Thorne, that a stalwart man of our eleven fell with an apoplexy and never spoke more, though he lingered for some weeks. It was needful to fill his place at short notice, and my master's name being canvassed

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

was at once rejected for its bearer's temperance (which, God knows, was not the most shining of the good man's merits), and that of Mr. Beamish, landlord of the *Fighting Cocks*, substituted and accepted, yet not without wagging of heads: "*We're jealous a bain't man enow for t' job; a's nobbut an eleven gallon man.*"

These words produced such an effect upon me that I drank no more that night, proffering the half of my pot to a goat that thrust her nose into the tavern door. The innocent creature took it off to the last drain, and was presently rolling, an object of mirth to my company and to myself (the more shame to me).

Yet, when the impression had subsided, and I the next week in the same place offered that goat more liquor, the wise animal shook her head and would none of it.

"My God!" cried I, struck to the heart, "have I less sense than Thy dumb creature?" and so, rising and paying my score, I went thither never again and found myself (against all advice and expectation), presently the better man in body and mind, and still better for the struggle which it cost me to make good my resolution.

By this too I gained some time for a book, and read more than I had done in all my life hitherto.

The book-room at Bramford held a collection of tall folios behind locked glass which I had never seen opened. The boxes of novels which reached my mother from her London library had no attractions for me. In summer there was always something to be done without doors, whilst in the winter after a three hours' run from Bullen Bushes to Hadleigh or Little Stoneham, I had felt more minded to sleep in my chair than weep over the sorrows of Mr. Richardson's ladies. "Tom Jones" had repelled me by his coarseness, nor had I patience with the saintly fool Allworthy for listening to a dull brute like Thwackum and disowning an honest lad.

CHAPTER TWELVE

How I longed on these sombre Sundays at Ouseby for one of the books I had neglected! The newly-awakened intelligence within me clamoured for its rights and craved for food. My mistress's shelf supported nothing lighter than "Law's Serious Call," "Alleyne's Alarm to the Unconverted," and some sermons by the Rev. John Wesley. Dr. Isaac Watts' "Scripture History" I had read from cover to cover.

It was during a between-sermons visit paid to the Circuit Leader, a Mr. Simeon Baxter, that I made the acquaintance of John Bunyan, beginning with "Mr. Badman," and working through "The Siege of Mansoul" to "The Pilgrim's Progress" — (a book which I left until last from some distaste of the title).

Marking my pleasure in his bookshelves their owner had me the more frequently to his table, and would still further have befriended me with sound advice had I confided to him my case. That he divined my birth I suspected from expressions he let fall whilst most delicately refraining from pressing himself unsolicited upon the privacy of misfortune.

The humanity of this excellent man to me, a stranger, in poverty and spiritual distress, I shall always recall with feelings of gratitude. He was elderly, in person undersized and short-sighted; his manner and accent though differing from that of the circle in which I had moved, were not markedly provincial, still less were they vulgar. Despite the slenderness of his wardrobe he seemed to me even in outward appearance a gentleman, or at least gentlemanlike, whilst in all that lay beneath externals, in unworldliness, gentleness, abstinence, goodness, and patience he excelled, and despite the terrifying nature of his sermons I was drawn to him.

Of these sermons I must shortly speak, for the man was celebrated in his way beyond the circuit he then administered, and became before his death one of the most

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ON THE BAITING OF BULLS AND METHODISTS

YOU must know that apart from the hiring-fair and usual Church festivals old custom yearly preserved to us in this town three days of riot. Of these Royal Oak Day and the Fifth of November commemorated historical deliverances, whilst Dean's or Dane's Day was held by the learned to refer to some defeat or expulsion of the Northmen.

All three were mere saturnalia, days of license, on which aldermen and watch kept within and magistrates winked hard, whilst unpopular characters and causes trembled.

The anniversary of King Charles's escape in the Boscobel Oak dawned (or rather of his birthday, for seldom did a May oak bear foliage thick enough to screen a man from vigilant eyes). The usual sports commenced. A football was kicked from end to end of the town by rival wards, rebounding from tiled roofs and shuttered windows. This was tame enough; the bull-baiting followed. A popular alderman and butcher found the bull; not the town only, but the whole country-side provided the dogs; farmers for miles around bringing their "tykes" to the proof.

That this should have been permitted in the thoroughfare may seem strange, but the middle of the High Street widened into the likeness of a rude circus, and was from of old known as

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"the Bull Ring," and here upon the cobbles, in the heart of the town, and beneath the windows of its principal burgesses, a disgusting spectacle was visible for some hours.

From the window of my loft I could recognize my master's customers, yeomen and graziers, passing uptown with their dogs to join the close-packed mob.

"There goes Maude of Catersby," said I, "and that will be Cennick of Stawell, and yonder are Robert and Edward Woodhead, the horse-dealers of Mutford, and that — who is that? Surely I know that man!" for moving with them was the same slight dark fellow, whose visage once seen I had never forgotten, the successful fighter at the *Barn Inn*.

He walked slowly, his keen face shaded by the peak of his cap, his hands in the pockets of his long brown riding-coat, in no haste to see the baiting, but his eyes moved right and left in his head marking everyone who passed him. I lost him at the turning into Back Street, and it is probable he lost the sport. For a Peterborough maltster to be in Ouseby struck me as singular, but it was no concern of mine and no sooner remarked than forgotten.

The death of the bull was always a critical moment with us. When the beast could fight no longer he was pole-axed and his beef distributed or fought for, and it was then, when bloods were at their hottest, that the elements of disorder were most to be feared.

It was commonly at this juncture that a cry would be raised and the rabbling of some unpopular person, or the defacement of some public monument would begin.

One year it had been the town lock-up and stocks that had been burned, the next it was a Baptist meeting-house that suffered.

From my post of observation I was aware that the bull was down, and some half-hour later it was plain that the moment had arrived and that mischief was afoot.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

In our larger cities the poor and the rich, the tradesmen and the men of law and of medicine, have separate quarters; but in small and ancient boroughs houses of the most various ages and characters are ranked cheek by jowl upon the causeway. Here a pretentious brick and stone mansion of Dutch William's time, flanked by coach-gates and guarded by posts and chains, is huddled up to on either side by a thatched cottage and a chandler's shop. It is thus at Ouseby where the rectory faces meaner houses across the Bull Ring, in one of which dwelt Mr. Simeon Baxter, and it seemed to me that the movement of the crowd was in the direction of his door.

This idea came to me with a sort of clap, and before I knew what I would be at I was down my ladder and through the house. My mistress's voice sounded from the back-shop, calling on me to stop, but for once I paid no heed to it, and rather raced than ran to the Bull Ring, where I found my fears justified.

The crowd had packed itself before Mr. Baxter's house, men and big lads, drunk or merely merry, bawling the more part knew not for what, nor why. But in the heart of the crowd was a knot of "Church and King Men," or True Blues, in whose minds Popery, Methodism and the Jacobins passed for different forms of the enemy which they held themselves bound to extirpate. These with bemuddled unanimity were crying "Down wi' the Pope; down wi' Methody; no wooden shoes!" whilst making ready the heavy chopping block, bloody from recent use, to serve as a battering-ram for breaking the door within which I had spent such pleasant hours.

At an upper window I could see Mr. Baxter making trial of speech with the crowd who replied with ribaldry and handful of garbage which fell back upon their own heads and those of others. Behind him I had a glimpse of the white faces of his wife and invalid daughter vainly attempting to withdraw him from danger.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

What I intended I knew not, no plan having presented itself to my mind whilst running, but by dint of pushing I reached the neighbourhood of those who held the block just as these had it poised for a rush, and, catching the biggest from behind by the ears, wrung him loose from his hold and flung him over my knee.

There followed a sudden cessation of sound that came near to being a silence. Those in the middle throng gaped upon me, those upon the outskirts, divining that the unforeseen had happened, held their tongues and climbed upon posts and door-steps to see.

"A fight! A fight!" was the cry. The fellow whom I had thrown, a big slaughterman, as it happened, and a man of his hands, turned upon me with a grin, and perceiving that my action was no accident, and that I was minded to abide by its consequences, nodded assent and backed into the crowd peeling, and bidding form a ring clear of the fallen block.

"'Tis Medcalf's porter! The Methody carter! Good forever! Did ye ever see the loike? Well done, young 'un, thou'llt git tha bellyful, niver fear, but keep tha hands oop whoile tha canst an' show us sport first!"

"And if I do, ye'll let Mr. Baxter's house be?" I stipulated.

"Yes." "No." "Baxter be damned; he's neyther here nor there." "We'll see hoo tha frames first,"—such was the best assurance I could extract.

Bob Woodhead, gazing upon me with a new kind of brotherliness, gave me a knee. His partner Ted ran for sponge and bucket. The vicar's churchwarden himself, a timber merchant, was one of my antagonist's seconds, elbowing aside a competitor for the honour with these words: "Well, *I* say d—n all dissenters, I'm for *the b—y Church*," a sentiment which the majority found wholly to its mind.

My antagonist had by this pulled his shirt over his head

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

and was got upon guard, a formidable figure, the little pig's eyes in his red visage a-twinkle with the glee of battle, his great shoulders and hairy chest crouched behind a pair of huge fists held level with his chin.

"Set to tha denner, Jock, 'tis sheep's head!" guffawed one.

"— and *pluck!*" capped my second. The crowd laughed good-naturedly.

Of the ten minutes or so that followed I remember but little. The ring was small and ill-kept by reason of the pressure of the crowd, which defects were against me, for I was by far the lighter and weaker man.

I have also an impression that the cobbles were bad footing and hard falling, and that I fell more than once or twice.

I was doubtless in the pink of condition, and inflamed with a very fever of determination to play out time and give the mob all the sport it wanted.

But my friend the butcher was by a good two stones the better man, and not so drunk but that he could fight stoutly and well, and when he got one of his blows home it told.

I dodged and feinted, ducked and countered, and put in practice every art I knew or had ever seen used, and I can yet experience a twinge of contentment at the thought that I fairly grassed my man twice; once at wrestling, and again with a risky right-hander upon the mark.

The shouting was not all one way. "*Well bit!* young Pogram!" rang out like the cracking of whips when I got one in.

But I was getting blind and weak and knew that the next time we closed he would knock me out, for I was no match for him at the half-arm rally.

It was in one of the lucid intervals of this mad business that I saw to my grief the house-door open and Mr. Baxter himself upon the steps with raised hands and such an expression of indignant pity upon his countenance as hurt me more than my bruises.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

For a moment that side of the ring turned to him, but nearer and more to dread was the outside circle whose view of the fighting had been unsatisfying. These ruffians seized him; he was drawn this way and that, and next moment would have been thrown down, when a tall and portly gentleman in black stepped through the crowd crying imperatively but calmly, "Stop that, my men, if you please!"

And stop they did, for this was the rector and justice of the peace, almoner of parish doles, warden of the almshouses, a man of very strong will and no small sense of what was due to himself and his office, whose patronage went far to make a tradesman's custom, and whose good word was a character to a labouring man.

Those who held the minister dropt their hands. The poor little man got his breath and essayed to speak, but the rector seemed unaware of his presence, and turning his shoulder to him, ran a keen, commanding eye over the crowd (which was already loosening), clearing his throat for speech.

"And now, my lads," said he, "we have had enough of this. We won't spoil our merry-making. . . . 'Tis time we were all getting along home. I am glad to see you all; and so I wish you a good day!"

And with that he lifted the glass that hung from his finger and let his eye travel deliberately across the bank of packed faces. The last of the mob broke up with horse-laughs, the great man watching with grim satisfaction the salutary effect of his presence. It was as when the doctor himself steps sedately into a ring of lower boys engaged in planning some waggery.

"How is your man?" This was to my bottle-holder, and surprised me, for I had heard it said that the rector had never recognized the existence of a dissenter.

I had regained my wind and got to my feet. He looked me

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

squarely between the eyes for a moment. "Be at my door at nine o'clock to-morrow!" said he, and without waiting for a reply, stepped grandly across the stones to his house, looking the fine gentleman he was.

"Eh, an' what'll thot mean? But niver mind, laad, 'toward rector 'll lat tha down easy. A loikes foine to see a good set-to; and dang ma sowl, if a thowt ye Methodies could ha put oop a laad thot 'ud stan' to oor Jock for foive minutes, lat alone ten!"

This seemed the general voice; the moment the rector's door closed my friend the butcher lurched up grinning, as usual, to offer me his hand. I had felt it already, but not in this shape. He, too, seemed in high good humour with himself and me and the world at large, despite the bruises he was caressing.

"Dommed if tha' bain't a game young cockbird! 'Twor a fair pleasure!" was as his deliverance. In short I was escorted to Medcalf's shop by a following of new-made friends, and for the moment dissent was almost popular in Ouseby; it was able to show sport.

The news had outrun my return. The shop-door was already unbarred; and I was received almost literally into the open arms of Mistress Medcalf, redder as to the nose and cheek-bones and more tearful as to the eyes than ever, shaken with hardly repressed indignation, still heaving with a passion of womanly fears, and ready to expend upon me such maternal tenderness as I had not thought her capable of shewing.

I needed it. I was rather badly knocked about, and the getting home, a bare furlong, had well-nigh taken the last ounce out of me.

My seconds were dismissed with the grave courtesy due to good customers who have given offence. She longed to rate them soundly. The door locked and the curtain drawn, a dust-

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

sheet laid in the kitchen, her husband was sent packing for the hog-tub, beside which, I, kneeling stript to the waist, was washed, larded, clipt, plaistered and bound up with vinegar and brown paper for the bruises, lily-leaves and brandy for the cuts.

Despite my smarts and a singing head I could have laughed at the poor figure my master seemed to make in his wife's eyes.

"Out o' my way! no, *not* that; the sponge, I said, didn't I? There, don't shove it down my throat! . . . To go and let a young lad meet gret, bletherin', sweerin', bull-faaced Jock Spence! an' *you*, a grown man, an' a strong man, skulkin' be'ind shutters whilst poor, dear Mr. Baxter — What's that ye're sayin'? (The towel, *if you please*, the soft one) — '*The servant of the Lord shall not strive?*' Oh, I know my Bible as well as here and there some, and, mark me, Medcalf, I'll not have Scripture throw'd at my head by *any* man, Medcalf, not if he was ten times my husband. And just answer me this, *if you please*, What did the Almighty go and make ye as strong as a bullock for, if 'twasn't to defend the weak? Tell me *that*, Medcalf! Fight? ye could fight fast enough before ye found salvation. Ah! I mind ye with a coal-black eye when you was courtin'! . . . An' him nobbut a child, in a figure! a David against that gret hulkin' Philistine! I said a child; don't answer me, Medcalf, look at his airms! not the half o' yourn! Now, not another word, *if you please*. He can't abear your noise, I'm sure; and I'm sick and silly at the sight o' ye, may God forgive me! Now up with that tub and empt it in the yard, and quick about it! And out ye gets and down to the *Cocks* for I'm going to quiet the house for George."

In fact she forbad my attempting the ladder to my loft, shaken as I was, and made me a "bice" of chairs in the kitchen, where, filled with all I could eat and drink, I slept like a top and awoke little the worse save in looks.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I AM TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL

BY the time appointed I was at the rectory back door and was, as it seemed, expected; the maid, without a word, shewing me through to an apartment in the front, which I judged to be the great man's justice-room or study, where I was bidden to wait.

The door standing ajar I could not but hear all that passed in the broad echoing hall paved with quarries of parti-coloured marble and giving to the street by the main door of the house. This being presently opened in response to a knock, I heard the voice of Mr. Baxter requesting an interview with the rector, and the retreating steps of the maid, leaving the caller, as I supposed, either upon the mat or in the porch.

Anon some inner door opened and closed upon a burst of ladies' laughter, and stately steps passed up the hall and paused.

"What is your pleasure?"

"I have ventured to call, sir—" the voice quavered slightly. I am persuaded that this was the first time the minister had passed that threshold. The social gulf between the speakers would, God knows, be sufficiently deep to-day; it was then unfathomable. The Earl of Mornington had not long before been granted letters patent to change his surname to escape the taint of his famous but unfashionable cousins the Wesleys,

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"I have ventured to call, sir — " Mr. Baxter repeated with a nervous cough: he could face a drunken mob bent upon doing him a mischief, but when he would have exchanged civilities with his august neighbour his words stuck in his throat! This little man who showed the courage of a lion when he heard the Divine call was oppressed by the timidities of the hare when prosecuting his private affairs.

"I have ventured — "

"So you have said already, my man, and so I perceive," interposed the rector, dryly.

" — to thank you, sir, and to tender you the heartfelt acknowledgments of my family and myself, of your humane and — and Christian interposition yesterday, when we were at the mercy of — of — of — "

Mr. Baxter hesitated, finding, perhaps, an unexpected difficulty in describing those who had wantonly attacked his dwelling in terms which would seem inoffensive to their spiritual chief. His assailants had included at least one churchwarden.

The rector gave him no assistance, and the sentence ended lamely.

There was a silence of several seconds' duration. The word lay with the rector, who was in no haste to end a situation which he plainly relished. He was for playing his fish before tossing him back to the water. My cheek burned at the tone in which he began.

"So far as I am able to gather the sense of your not especially coherent remarks, I conceive that you are under a mistake. You have nothing to thank me for. The ladies of my household found the noise disturbing. I requested the good people to go away. If, — er, at any time (which seems unlikely) you should have anything to say to me, I should prefer your coming to the service door. I wish you a good day."

The street door closed. Through the wicker window blind

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

guess how it stands with you, but, 'once a gentleman, always a gentleman.' There is excellent stuff in you, I maintain it! And I was never deceived in my judgment of a man yet. I have not lost faith in you, so believe in yourself. What? we will start fresh; pluck up your heart; take your self-respect again in both hands!"

This was worse and worse.

"Sir! you go too fast," I cried. "I am not a felon; I am no disgraced man; there is nothing — nothing upon my hands, or name, or conscience that makes me unworthy to touch glasses with you!"

"What, then?"

"It is you, sir — yes, you, who have but this minute insulted my friend!"

"Your — *friend*? Pardon me, I do not quite take you. You cannot have apostatised to these vulgar sectaries?"

"I am not a Methodist, if that is what you mean, but —"

"Then why — what —? See here; a gentleman, a Fanshawe, may sink his gentrice for a term to earn his bread (as so many of these unfortunate *émigrés* are doing). You are of the younger branch, I take it; pardon my ignorance, we Yorkshiremen are not so familiar with your southern stocks as we should be. What was I saying? Ah, yes! 'tis no disgrace to pouch the shilling one has sweated for, *non olet*, you remember? But, you said '*friend*'; the fellow is a dissenter!"

"For what did you think I fought?" I blurted. "You don't know how good he is!" but I beat upon a locked door.

"As your rector, sir, I cannot reason with you. You must take it from me that the sin of schism is no light thing in the sight of the Almighty."

We were hopelessly at cross-purposes. I am no talker, nor ever was. I bowed and turned to the door. He was before me

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

and held it wide with the finest courtesy. In the porch he extended his hand.

"You have taken it once!"

"I was surprised, sir, then," said I, keeping mine behind me. We bowed low to one another and parted. The door closed behind me upon paradise; all my lower nature, all my old self cried out upon my folly, yearned for the softness and fineness of the spacious life I had known and had lost. The cadences of that rich voice, the gestures and movements of the man, the ripple of ladies' laughter had thrilled me like an old song.

But between us stood a wall of this man's own building, his harsh scorn of all that I had just found to be so good.

I strode back to my stable the happier and the prouder for my protest.

"Eh, laad! tha looks finely considerin'. A wish a could luke as peart masen!"

'Twas Ted Woodhead reining up a rough roadster to greet me in passing.

"Why, what ails ye?" said I.

"Matter! Matter enough, lad. A thievin' matter! a hangin' matter, too, as I ho-apes to see it, if I walks to the gallows nine miles barefoot and fastin'! D — n the roogs! Ma' osses! the soondest, best bred, oop-stannin' est geldings i' the riding! All gone! stollen! D — n the villains!"

"Ne — ver!" I gasped, for the magnitude of the man's loss appealed to me.

"Eh, laad! these are bad times! What wi' Methodies — but, I beg tha pardon! an' bloody French Jacobites, an' Hirish Papishes, a honest Yorkshire laad canna go to a bull-baitin' wi' out findin' his stock stollen whan 'e coomes 'ome! Lord! 'tis crool! 'tis crool!"

"But your men —"

"Our *fellers*?" he brought the ground ash down upon his

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

buskin with a sounding thwack. "Where should they be? At the yale-house, laad, droonk as lords! 'ticed awaay there, they *saay*, an' summut put in their drink, seemingly; for there's ne'er a man o' them can keep his eyes open yet, tho' Bob an' I has hided 'em to rights, I gi' tha ma word!"

"Eh, but Bob's maad — maad! he's away to owd York for runners and bills, and I'm for t'owd rector for a constable and a warrant, and so good day to thee, and mind tha keeps tha eyes about tha when drivin' the roads, tha knaws our geldings, all docked greys, true Yorkshire coachin' stock.

Aye, and for the thieves too. Look tha, one's a Gypsy, a dommed hatchet-fäaced roog (I've seen him aboot the pläace masen a week since) in a cat-skin cap, wi' rings in his ears and a red comforter where the halter shall be yet!"

"I'll not forget," said I, and then upon an impulse stayed him as he would be riding off, my mind, as you may say, hunting a stale line, "What of the master-thief? was he not a great, hulking sailor-man?"

"Noa, laad, noa, whativer maks tha ask? The feller they called 'captain' were a wee, jocky-built man, nobbut a younker to look at. 'Sam' they called him, or one of our chaps says they did, but what's thot to go upon? *Sam* indeed! D — n the roog! wheer's ma osses? Dressed? hoo was t'feller *dressed*, tha wants to know? Hoo should a be dressed? loike another maan, loike masen, i' leathers, mebbe"; he slapped his own, then recollecting himself, "Oa, i'a longish, brown ridin'-coat, loike this-sa, ma nagsman said (he'll be sayin' next thot a stowll ma 'osses masen!). Oa, and a beaver, was it? Noa, I jaloose 'twere a cap wi' peak and pull-downs fur t'ears. But, there, a mun bid tha good day, fór t'longer a stan' chattin' here, t'further ma 'osses wull a got."

He was gone. I had the clue in my hand, as you can see, as I can see myself now, but let it drop unheeded. Similarities of

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

dress, identity of name went for nothing to a mind already possessed by a couple of fixed ideas, viz., that Mr. Sam Brown was a Peterborough maltster (had not the driver of the mail said so?) and (my own conceit this) that the master-ruffian must needs be a sailor and an over-sized fellow. That a dapper little tradesman, so respectably attired, and such an excellent man of his hands, could possibly be a common horse-thief was not to be thought of.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE FALL OF AN IDOL

MY employers were called well-to-do, and so they were, or might have been, but for a passion for giving which kept them poor.

Never had I seen then, nor ever since, such givers as they.

Their beneficence was not the easy weakness that divests itself of its superfluities to the first or loudest claimant. The vagrant who could give no clear account of his last job and future intentions got nothing at their hands. It was an ordered, long-foreseen scheme that engrossed their thoughts and their savings; nothing less than providing their circuit with adequate meeting-houses, which, as their fellow sectaries were, for the most part labouring folk with whom pence were scarce, pressed heavily upon the few who could give to any purpose.

For this end they deliberately bound themselves to find such monthly installments as seemed to me, listening to their unguarded table-talk, out of proportion to their means.

(*"Tis lent to the Master, Faber!"* was my poor mistress's word. Ah! well do I remember it.)

For this, then, they slaved early and late. For this, too, they drove harder bargains than I could always in my heart approve. "But, then," said I, "this is the way of business, a matter of which until lately I knew nothing, but by which, as it seems,

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

I am to get my bread for a while. 'Tis a dog-eat-dog sort of game, and not to my taste, but necessary, like butchering and sailing; and I, being in for it, must not be squeamish. These good folks doubtless know the rules, and if they are over keen in getting, are bounteous in giving, God knows!" So I quieted my conscience and worked at their business until I was as hard as an oaken post from shoulder to heel and fell asleep the instant I laid cheek to bolster.

During the month that followed my interview with Mr. Godolphin, it had crossed my mind at times that a crisis was approaching. To complete a purchase of land for a meeting-house my employers had mortgaged some freeholds, and the half-yearly charge being overdue the mortgagee grew impatient and threatened foreclosure. In a word, this worthy couple were in trouble and without a friend to turn to.

Night after night they wrestled in prayer, and still the answer delayed.

Jabez scoured the country collecting debts, but our customers were bare of ready money, their haysel still in doubt and harvest afar off; he must wait.

Growing discouraged he resorted more frequently and earlier in the day to the porch-bench of the *Fighting Cocks*, where, over a tankard of his favourite brew he argued endlessly with the adherents of Mr. Godolphin, returning late and somewhat unsteadily to a severe but silent wife, who had learned to make allowance for man's frailty and for the trials of this particular man and season.

There was the miller to be paid, beside, a man whom my employers respected; whom (as they admitted) they had "run" as far as they dared, since their credit with him was precious.

Well do I remember the Friday night in June preceding his expected call.

My interviews with big Jock Spence and his rector had in

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

no way lessened my employers' regard for me, or their solicitude for my conversion.

At family worship I had been prayed for until I sweated with anguish at the prospect of God's anger and the fiery doom of the lost. I beheld the mouth of the pit gaping for my poor helpless soul, and then, as my mistress pleaded as with a Presence in the room itself, I quivered and throbbed, and *almost* found salvation. My master's deep-breathed amens were in my ear, his great palm beat time upon my shoulder, the stool chattered under me to the bricks upon which I knelt; I yearned and strove, and forgot for the time those awful doubts as to the fairness of it all, this atrocious creed of theirs, with its wheel-work deity ticking blindly on from eternity to eternity and everlastingly blasting the poor faulty creatures whom He had — made so.

I palpitated and writhed, I say, and next moment the strain relaxed, and she was appealing to the helper of His children for help for her man and herself in the very words of the sorely-tried Psalmist, brokenly, earnestly, at last confidently.

"Jabez!" she said, solemnly, as she rose from her knees, "the answer has come. Mark me, to-morrow *the Lord will provide!*"

It was on the Saturday afternoon, but still early, that the miller called, as I knew he would, for we were two months behind in our payments.

I was mending sacks in the meal-store beside the shop into which it opened, having a door of its own to the street besides. Here as I worked, seated astride a bag of pollard with my fingers busy and my mind more settled and at ease than since I had come to Ouseby, I heard wheels and the sounds of a horse brought to a stand without, and then, close at hand in the shop, the voice of Mr. Ellwood the Quaker, greeting my mistress.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

As I expected, he had called for his overdue account, and, knowing, as I did, that the money was with us in the house, it disturbed me to hear my mistress lead the conversation astray, and, when brought gently back to the point, hesitate and ask for yet another month's grace.

But her creditor demurred, reminding her of promises given a month and two months before, upon which he had (as he said) relied, having engagements of his own to meet in turn.

The man spoke slowly, gently, but with decision. My mind went with him.

Then there was the chink of coin, and through the wide rift of the hinge before me as I sat, I could see Mr. Ellwood telling the money, and presently the scratching of a quill told me that he was writing his receipt.

All passed in a natural manner. My presence behind the door, though known to my mistress, who had spoken to me from the shop some half-hour before, may well have escaped her, nor was there anything in my work to remind her or apprise her creditor of my presence. The bright bent needle slid in and out the sack-cloth and drew silently after it lengths of soft filasse; it was only when I folded and laid aside a mended sack, or chose another from the heap awaiting repair, that my movements were audible to others.

Suddenly there was a snarl of a dog without and a soft cry, followed by a clatter of hoofs and the rasp of departing wheels.

The miller ran from the shop leaving the counter strewn with his money. I, glancing through the chink to learn what had happened, beheld my mistress's face gazing after him sharpen and chill to a sudden bleakness; "*Will — provide!*" she bleated brokenly; I caught the ring of money and the crumpling of paper, but in my confusion and haste these sounds conveyed no meaning at the moment. Springing through the street door behind me, which stood ajar, I saw the dog of

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

our opposite neighbour, the tanner, slinking off with the tucked-in tail that tells of guilt, and the miller's gig rattling down street, with Mr. Ellwood in hopeless pursuit.

Now the road that way makes a sharp bend — (the place is called "Crooked Ouseby") — and it came upon me that with luck I might cut off the runaway.

Scudding across the street and through the tanner's yard-gates I was out at the back and had traversed the length of his bark-sheds before I drew breath. He was shifting hides from a pit and looked up, hook in hand, with some word that I waited not to answer, for I had leapt the gate into his long paddock and was running my hardest for the palings at its farther end beyond which was the road. These, too, I leapt, and, though the drop shook me, had breath enough left to strip my slop and to swing it aloft before the mare, now around the corner and galloping wildly, was upon me. She swerved, faltered, changed her foot and I knew she was mine. Next moment I had her safely by the head, and brought her to a stand, though dragged a few yards.

There was nothing in this to praise: it was but what many and many a country-bred lad who knows horses will do and reckon as all in his day's work.

Yet I was pleased with myself, as a man will ever be who has run his best and caught what he ran to catch, be it a ball or a horse; and, whisking the dust out of my eyes, I was first aware of an occupant of the gig, a young girl pale and scared, whose little hands shook as they fumbled upon the rein. It was the sweet young face of my fancy.

Our eyes met and her's thanked me, tho' her lip quivered too much to be trusted with speech when I raised my cap and hoped she was unhurt. The seat beside her was strewn with a posy of fritillaries, white and purple, which she had dropt when she clutched the reins. I must always remember that day when I see that flower.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

I had turned the mare and was leading her back when the runners came up, Mr. Ellwood panting among them, his features awork with just-passed fear and present gratitude. He gripped my hand hard and returned beside me, quieting the horse but saying little.

At the sight of the shop open and unkept he looked concerned and found his tongue, though still out of breath.

"I left — in haste — and without — thought for the money," he said, "there was forty pounds and more lying loose upon the counter. I trust —"

"Have no fear, sir," said I, "my mistress was gathering it when I left. I saw her."

And with that, we being at the shop again, I turned into the street-door of the meal-store, and he, as I suppose, giving his horse to some man to hold, went up into the shop.

It was empty.

I was for resuming my needle-work but must needs wait a while, my hands shaking with running. While thus idle I heard Mr. Ellwood in the shop calling clearly for my mistress twice, and, after a pause, her answer from above in the house, and her step upon the stair.

"And was the little lady scairt?" she asked, entering briskly with her hand pressed to her side, and, without waiting for an answer, ran on praising God that no harm had befallen any. "I could not watch ye; indeed I could not. I came over all faint-like, and must have gone off had I not got to my bed. I am but this moment risen on hearing ye call."

"Yes, we must be thankful. It was mercifully overruled. And now, neighbour Medcalf, I will thank thee for my money."

"Your — *money*? Surely, sir, it lies here, all here, where ye left it. Where else?"

"Ten guineas are missing of the amount," he replied with gravity.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

I caught my breath with a premonition of something impending.

"*Ten guineas!*" she repeated in a changed and heightened key. "Indeed, I am sorry for ye, Mr. Ellwood, but what can we expect if we leaves the door wide and our money loose and all about whilst chasing a horse?"

"But surely thou didst not leave it unguarded? The receipt I signed is gone, beside; it lay with the money and was of no value to the thief. Think, my friend; we do things awry in moments of agitation, but the remembrance of what we did presently returns, as this will to thee. Think!"

"All I can say is — " she began.

"Nay, give thyself time! Let me help thee to recall what passed. When the horse started I stood here, so; and thou where thou stands now; and the money — forty, sixteen, nine — lay between us in piles as I had told it. Thou remembers? Well, 'twas not so when I returned, but mixed and scattered and the gold short. Think; thy first impulse was to gather it together for safety, for I am told thou — "

"'Tis a lie, I tell ye! As God is my witness I never laid finger to it!"

"Stop!" cried Ellwood with sudden sternness.

"Oh, stop her, don't let her! Oh, don't say it, Mistress!" I cried in an agony, bursting upon them.

There was a moment of heavy silence, my apparition taking both so utterly by surprise.

My poor mistress backed away from me although the counter lay between us, holding her hands as if to ward me off.

Mr. Ellwood, absolutely composed and painfully grave, said nought.

"*Here is the thief!*" cried Mrs. Medcalf in a high-pitched, hard, unnatural voice. "Ah! ye wretch, to think that ye should rob us after all our prayers for ye! He was behind that door,

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Mr. Ellwood, from first to last. I clean overlooked the wretch when I left the shop. Here's the thief ready to your hand. Send men for the constable and for Mr. Godolphin, quick! Ah, sinner, sinner! Be sure your sin shall find you out!"

As for myself I had no word to say. The horror of the thing stunned me. It was not the thought that this might be a hanging charge which appalled me — (before Romilly's time men, and women too, hung for thefts of thirteence from the person, and for five shillings from a shop) — no, 'twas the awful change in the woman, the face that had never turned to me before save in kindness, the lips that had agonised for my soul as a mother's might agonise for the life of her dying babe, were altered, fallen. The eyes were the eyes of a hunted cat. It was the visage of a termagant fighting for her life and careless whom she wounded and dragged down.

But Mr. Ellwood, a man of the soundest judgment and rare self-control, closed the shop-door both half and top lest her loudness should incur irreparable scandal, and turning himself to her, and placing a gentle hand upon hers, said — "Hephzibah Medcalf, thou art beside thyself. Whatever has become of the money, or whoever has taken it, this young man is innocent. In his case it was not possible. He left thy store as I passed it, running; he must have outrun me, how I know not, for 'twas he that caught my mare. It was he that led her back to this door, for I walked beside him. Nor was he the first to enter thy shop; it was empty when I passed that threshold. Again, I entreat thee, think! What hast thou done with those ten guineas?"

She looked from him to me and back again to him, but furtively; she could not meet the eye of either, and began once more to call her Maker to witness her innocence, but brokenly, hopelessly, mechanically.

"Are ye mad, Mistress?" I stammered. "Listen to me

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

and collect yourself before 'tis too late. Before I left my seat there, see! close to the door-cheek — I saw you — yes, *you* — at the money; your hands were over it, so; I heard ye crumple some paper, too. Come! maam, try to remember what ye have done with it; try, for Christ's sake!"

"Viper!" she shrilled with flaming cheeks, and throwing herself half across the counter fetched me a sudden cuff that set my cheek burning, and then cowered back with her hands before her face, her shoulders heaving with her sobs.

I shifted a foot without speech or formed intention, but at the sound she moved a hand and shot so apprehensive a glance at the shelf behind me that I too glanced that way.

You must know that the smaller wooden measures we used in our trade when not in hand were kept upon that shelf. My mistress was an orderly person, and would have her husband and me put everything in its place. What I saw was that the pint-pot had broken rank, and with one of those unaccountable intuitions that visit one at times, and of which one's work-a-day self is incapable, I raised my hand to the measure.

In a moment she was upon me.

"Don't touch it, George! O, as you love me, for the dear Lord's sake, George, let it be! Oh, George! — dear George!"

For I, lifting it carefully down and finding it heavier than it's won't, placed it in Mr. Ellwood's hands, seeing only its mouth stopped with a ball of crumpled paper.

"My receipt!" quoth he very low, and withdrawing the wad and seeing what lay beneath, "and — my money! Young man, I thank thee for the second time to-day. Wilt thou kindly say nothing? — but I need not ask it. Perhaps thou wilt leave me with thy mistress."

"My poor, poor friend!" was his word, breathed low and brokenly with an infinite, pitiful gentleness. I closed the door upon them, and climbing to my loft flung myself upon my knees.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The world rocked with me and ran round; whatever I clutched at failed. A horror of darkness, empty and drear, fell upon my spirit. It was all done with; a vile and rotten pretence from underpinnings to ridge-tile! The all-but effected conversion, the work of three months, ripped like rotten sacking and fell from me, leaving me nakeder and colder than before I knew my sin or felt the need of Grace.

She — she, their minister, the divider of the Word, whose tones, looks and gestures had moved me and had moved crowded meeting-houses to tears, or set all hearts swelling with strong hopes; she, upon whose head a great saint had laid ordaining hands, she, the Deborah, the holy Anna of this country-side, a liar, a thief, a false accuser!

I writhed in a very agony of shame — no sin of my own (and God knows my sins have been many) ever caused me such utter humiliation and grief.

“Oh Lord! Lord!” I cried, expecting no answer to my cry, for the light that had been but a reflected light, borrowed from her, was gone out.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I FORGET GOD

I ROSE from my knees a beliefless man, an orphaned soul adrift in a universe deserted by its Maker.

Nor could I face my mistress again. I tied my bundle and left the house. Never did thief caught in his larceny slink from the scene of his disgrace more brokenly than I.

Looking neither to right nor left I passed down the street, dreading each moment to be accosted and questioned by some neighbour. Dumb beneath my load of misery it did not cross my mind to say good-bye to Mr. Baxter; to have included that good and pure soul in my revulsion against Methodism was sinfully unjust. May it be forgiven me! I was little better than a boy, ignorant and passionate.

Other friend in Ouseby I had none, hardly acquaintance even. With the young men of my age and (supposed) station who affected the Establishment I had little in common. It was a day of looseness in speech and life in all classes, against which Methodism was itself the protest. In Ouseby you must perforce be one or the other, and by the chances of the night of my entering the town I was ranked from the first among the Saints and had made no acquaintance outside their sect. Nor many within it; for whether it were some strangeness in my dialect and style repelled them (as theirs repelled me) I

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

was considered uncompanionable by the chapel-going youth.

Nor by good luck, or my own ungainliness, did I leave, so far as I know, one Ouseby lass with a thought of me in her bosom.

I had found the talk of these north-country folk a difficulty at the onset, and to the end it seemed to me inexpressibly coarse, and their manners singularly blunt compared with ours in Suffolk, and the distinction in speech and behaviour between the common people and our class more pronounced than at home.

In time I grew used to this in the men, my workmates, but in the mouths of women and girls it continued to repel me as something strange and unnatural, and they remained foreigners to me, and, I doubt not, I to them.

Many of these countrywomen and marriageable girls were as men in bone, stature and strength; their striding gait, breadth of hip, and boisterous carriage were an amazement to me, as were their tow-coloured hair, white eye-lashes and freckled faces, after the brown hair, brown eyes and apple cheeks of our Suffolk dumplings.

But I have left myself in act of slipping out of Ouseby as unobserved as might be.

Yet I was not to escape altogether unmarked. Unless I repeated my short cut through the tanner's yard I must needs pass the *Fighting Cocks*, and there upon his favourite bench sat my master, pipe in hand and pot at elbow, our next neighbour Oades the woolstapler upon his one side, and Beamish the host upon the other.

"'Ullo, Gearge!" he cried, arising a trifle heavily, and stayed me by a hand upon my shoulder, humming a stave from his favourite hymn:

*"Of serious subjects we will sing,
Damnation and the dead!"*

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

and then half turning, with a hiccup continued his interrupted parable.

"Now, *I* maintain as ye two stand, as the Book says, in slippery places . . . Wait a bit!"

"Stiddy! stiddy! old friend!" purred Oades. "I reads ma Bible — not so often as I might, but read it I do, sometimes, and as I reads I walks."

"Rides!" interjected my master with a sneer, for the wool-stapler was notoriously slothful.

"Rides, then, for ma trade lies widish, and coom to thot, sitha of a Sunday how I trēats ma 'oss. No compassin's and tearin's acrost sea and laand for to maaake one proselyte! Eh, Jabez?"

Mr. Beamish chuckled.

"No!" pursued Oades, "but I oops an' gi's him a extry feed o' corn, and *thāat* I calls 'loving mercy', then I rubs him down speshul handsome, and coombs oot 'is *tāail*, and *thāat* I calls 'doin' justly,' and arter I leads 'im along so easy to watter, and *thāat* I calls 'walkin' 'umbly,' and *my* Bible tells *me* to 'do justly, an' love mercy, and walk 'umbly,' and so I does. Now, what d'ye maaake o' *thāat*, Methody? Ah, I've got yel!"

"Filthy rags!" cried my master, "ye are of them that go about to 'stablish their own righteousness, like Beamish here."

"Not so fast, Mr. Medcalf," said the host; "now you 'tend to me; I brews strong ale (we draws no small at *The Cocks*,) I gi's ye good measure — blow off that head and if the pot isn't full I'll fill it. I keeps open house all legal hours, and if a poor soul be dry in church time he knows which shutter to rap in my backyard. How's that for ye, Mr. Medcalf?"

"Carnal righteousness! Ye're both on ye restin' on works, and 'pon my soul, if the pair on ye was shook to-and-again

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

in a sack the devil only knows which'd come out forrardest!"

Then, wheeling towards me a triumphant face, and taking me in with a bemused and genial eye:

"Aha! I see ye, I seen it all; well run, Gearge! dall me, but ye can wag yer lags! But I didn't say nothin' when 'e comed back wi' the gig. Sez I, 'Lay back, Jabez, lave 'um to Hephzi-bah!' sez I, 'she'll work 'um, if so be as 'e is to be worked!' " Then with a wink and an attempt at a whisper, "Did she run 'um another month, Gearge?"

"I doubt not, master," said I, "but — fact is, this is good-bye. I'm leaving you."

"Leavin' ? Wha' for ? *Wubbegwain* ?" he stuttered, dropping deeper into his native speech, for, unlike my mistress, who was Lincolnshire, my master was Wiltshire born.

"*Wubbegwain*, I say ?" his face darkened. "But never mind, ye *can't* go. Ye owe us s-s-seven days' notice."

"True, master, I'd forgot that, but 'tis Saturday and you've my week's wages in hand, and for my board take these three shillings."

"Tha's fair!" he remarked, considering the silver in his hand ere he spat on it for luck. "But wha' for ?" he repeated, waving off my offered hand. "Ye ain't had words wi' Hephzi-bah, sure-ly ? . . . N'mind her, Gearge, *she* don't mean nothing ; I ought to know! And she's mortal set on ye, too. Co' back 'long o' me now, and meake it up!"

"No, Mr. Medcalf, thank ye kindly, but I'm done with Ouseby, and much beside. For the reason, ask my mistress to-morrow, and — believe what she tells ye."

He grasped my hand and held it until my nails pricked. His brown ox-eyes clouded up, and pacing beside me in silence to the turn of the road he lugged out a crown and made me take it.

"Gearge! Gearge! ye are gwain from hwome, my son; ye're

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Night overtook me in a great meadow around which I wearily trudged without finding any exit save the gate by which I had entered, so the night being warm, overcast and extremely dark, for the moon was in her first quarter, I thought it neither sin nor hardship to lie rough, and finding (more by nose than by sight) two great half-cut ricks and a stump of old hay, I climbed to the top of the lowest, drew the thatch about me and thought to fall asleep.

Certainly I was overtired, the scythe being still strange to me; my head hummed, my wrists tingled and twitched, but at length I dropt off, and in a long, hot dream I smelled the smell of horses and heard their jaws moving below me and the talking of men. My bed rocked under me and I awaked to find my dream true. In the thick darkness beneath horses moved and fed and men stilled them, conversing in guarded tones.

Then burst upon the night the high metallic pitch of a man singing — such a voice it was as they have who sing at fairs and wakes and beside the roads, and as for the song it was one I had heard at a harvest-home in Suffolk.

*"I went for a walk and I met wi' a snail,
Tiddle alone!
I rode between his horns and his tail,
Tiddle alone! Tiddle alone! Tiddle
comes roll — ing home!!!"*

The songster, whoever he might be, was in drink, for he blundered against the rump of a horse, which nickered and shifted as he smote it a sounding spank with his open hand and bade it get over.

"Damn that tinker! he'll rouse the traps," growled a bass voice just below me.

"Silence, therel Leal d'ye hear?" This was a voice I had

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

heard somewhere — its level tone of decision found an echo in memory, but neither name, time, nor place hung to it.

*"Then for pit - y I prayed
The po-o-or smug-gler's booöy!"*

brayed out into the silent night again, and must have been audible a mile away.

I heard the voices of two, or it might be three others chiding the singer, and then oaths and high words.

"He has got at it again, Captain; we must down him or he'll stretch the necks o' the lot on us!" growled the deeper of the two voices at hand. There was no reply; the brawl was spreading. Horses ceased feeding and stamped.

"Yes, Dan, 'tis his third; he's had his warnings. Go you and down him."

"I dursn't; he's the better man I doubts, and he'll knife any bloke as fetches him a clout; he's said so. . . ."

"I'd down him if he was my twin brother. Damn the sot, he has queered this pitch; we must sling our hooks!"

The speaker was upon his feet; his comrade spoke, "That's so, but for Gawd's sake, Mister Sam, take care; what'd we do wi'out ye?"

"All right, stay where you are," bade the level voice, and steps rustled off upon the hay.

By this there was a fine to-do, the disputants hard at it with their hands, and the weaker yelping shrilly under the blows of the stronger. Then the uproar dropt suddenly, and in the ominous quiet that followed I caught that level officer-like voice bidding the gang to horse. With gruff whispers the beasts were bitted and sorted and moved off in an order and upon a line known to the gang. Last to go were the deep-voiced Dan and he they called captain, both of whom seemed hampered with more led horses than the rest.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

When the main cavalcade had gone, and the swish of feet in the standing grass was stilled, the long-drawn snores of a sleeper reached me from somewhere near at hand. "He sleeps well; whereabouts'll he pick us up?" "In hell, mate!" was the grim reply, jerked in the interval of taking up a girth. Both chuckled and next moment were mounted. I heard the stirrup-leathers stretch and the squeak of saddlery and muffled hooves for a minute, and then, thinking myself well rid of my company, "Fair traders," said I; "there will be kegs of hollands on those led horses;" so yawning I snuggled down into the whispering scented hay and slept again.

I was roused in a wonderful midsummer's dawn by the clamour of a hundred birds. Every creature that can sing seemed singing, a dozen cuckoos were shouting their names, corncrakes were calling and chasing one another around the ricks, sedgebirds clucked and grated from some pool near by, whilst pheasants drummed and crowed close at hand. Rubbing sleepy eyes and ears tingling with hay-seed I looked upon a level bank of morning fog out of which, like rocks in a tide-race, stood the rounded heads of white-thorns far and near. I slid down from my bed to find the ground littered ankle-deep with hay pulled wastefully from the ricks, trampled and mired. My bed-chamber had been so undermined as to make me marvel it had not fallen and discharged me among the cattle.

Moving around the place, stretching and yawning, the sounds of the past night came back and I bethought me of the quarrelsome toper left to sleep off his carouse. There he lay, face down across a heap of stover, a gaunt muscular fellow, bareheaded, in sleeved waistcoat, breeches and leggings, his limbs relaxed in the abandonment of profound slumber. The light improved momentarily, and peering nearer I was shocked to see the back of his head plastered with a blackened cake of dried blood. It seemed to me that he lay unnaturally

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

still. Approaching on tiptoe I listened and watched for a full minute, but could detect no motion of breathing. The thought that he was smothering possessed me, so, taking him by an arm I swung him off his face. He came stiffly, heavily, and altogether; his eyes were half opened and glazed, his jaw fallen, his ears full of dried blood. The man was dead.

When I had realised this thing I stood like a stock gazing open-mouthed upon the waxen vacant face, afraid of the corpse which I had not feared whilst I thought it a living man. Where had I met this Gypsy fellow before? those silver ear-rings amid the loose black curls, the Asian nose, the lean yellow cordage of the throat looped in its scarlet neckerchief, seemed half familiar.

It was an hour later that the fight at the *Barn Inn* crossed my mind, and with a jump I recalled the cat-skin cap of that tinker fellow who had seconded "Mister Sam," and had since been concerned in the stealing of the Woodhead's horses. At the time I remembered nothing, thought of nothing but the patent fact of a sudden and violent death.

Nor dared I touch the body nor search the clothing for what might afford a clue. Pity, disgust and fear shook me by turns. This was no place for me, a tramping harvester, to be found beside the corpse of one dead by violence. I could do no tittle of good to the dead wretch by remaining — no evidence that I could give to constable or coroner would identify men whom I had not so much as seen.

To get away quietly and promptly seemed wisdom, but whither? And in what direction to start? The fog held me bound. I got to the top of the tallest rick, and found myself above it; the sun was rising, a glistening orange ball all out of shape; a distant farm chimney showed above the bank, but my best mark was the sparkle of a church vane some mile or more away.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Whilst thus observing I was myself observed. "Look'ee there!" cried a voice in the fog, "this'll be one on 'em!" and dimly through the ground haze I perceived three men approaching. A panic seized me; sliding to the ground I sped through the standing grass in the opposite direction, found and kept a broad track beaten by the hooves of horses, and running blindly and hard, my scythe bumping upon my shoulder, I put a mile between me and the scene of the murder before I dropped to a walk, nor did it seem safe to seek work until a long day's march lay behind me.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE IRISH

THE passage of that slow summer is still a dream to me — an unhappy dream. Wounded pride paced at my elbow as I walked the roads, kept step and stroke with me, as I swung my scythe, couched at my side among the sheaves at night. That the first advance should come from those who had misjudged me was my fixed determination, and I took a grim pleasure in the thought that for some months at least I should be beyond the reach of reproach or pardon.

Just where my work took me I have never been able to make out and at the time was quite incurious. In the main the weather and the work were good; I lived sparsely and slept rough, looked upon askance by the regular hands of the farms whereon I worked, and herding chiefly with Irish, poor, silent, sad-eyed fellows with but little English or love for those who spoke it.

You, my young relatives, will be wondering how a man of condition could so easily fall so low, and will be hardly persuaded how readily I was reconciled to the absence of almost all that a gentleman reckons essential. You may take it from me, then, that a well-bred Englishman is a particularly hardy animal, and, as was shown by not a few of our order under Lord Wellington, can march as far, lie as hard, and fare as

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

nimble and cool. The whole business had not taken him fifteen seconds; it was the work of a genius, the adroitest trick in the world.

I lifted my man to his feet, beat the dust from his wig, and helped him to adjust his clothing. He clung to me dizzily.

"Aw — yawl!" groaned he, fingering tenderly the angles of his jaws. "My mare shied and threw me, the rogue came on us so sudden. 'Tis that — Sam Smith; again, I'll lay my life 'tis he! Who else would rob a sheriff on his way to a hanging? — and within hail of his men, b'Jove! — so close that the villain durst not use his pistol, b' George! Curse me, but my jaws ache! He got me on the point o' the chin. He can box, too, for I thought I knew a thing or two myself."

I left him panting against an open gate beside a rick, swearing robustly, and was presently back again with his horse.

"I owe ye something for this, at least," said he. "For the rest 'tis 'Thank-ye for nothing'— ye ran fast enow when ye did run, but ye started too late, b'Gum!" then, venting the last of his spleen in a hearty guffaw, he tost me a guinea found in an inner pocket and followed it up with his card, "Show this to my steward if ye want a job," said he.

I helped him to horse, and my companions, who had neither seen nor heard anything, coming up at the moment, we parted. And this was my first and last meeting with a gentleman to whom my father had promised me a letter of introduction.

It was from one of these Irish, a man of better parts than his mates, that I got my first news of the dreadful state of the country from which he had as a matter of fact fled in terror. He confided to me how that his distracted race was to have risen as one man upon a certain day in the past spring (I think in March), and that the landing of an army of French Jacobins had been confidently expected: that the mutual jealousies of the Scotch-Irish of the North and the Papist

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

mountainy men, their neighbours, had paralysed the Ulster rising, and left Wicklow and Wexford with their backs to the wall.

Of the harrowing sights he had witnessed, the tortures, military executions, fire-raising, plunderings, ravishings, and all the horrors of the savagest civil war between neighbours and men of the same blood and name and religion, he would tell me at night beside a little fire of sticks, in the corner of some coppice beneath the great burning stars, aye, with heart-breaking sobs and the tears shining wet upon his face.¹

"And 'tis oh, for some wan to lift the breast-bone off me heart!" was his cry; and indeed, I have feared at times his sorrow would be the death of him.

It seems that this revolt, though commonly held a popish plot, was not so, since numbers of Protestants, both gentle and simple (my companion for one), were actively engaged in the rising, and more were privy to it.

On the other side some of the regiments which displayed most loyalty and energy in suppressing the rebellion were largely composed of Papists, for instance, the North Cork Militia, in which his two brothers served, as he assured me.

This person and I kept company for some weeks, and I did not fail to observe that whilst at work in the harvest-field or upon the road he was in receipt of information from passing Irishmen of other gangs, information which only added to his grief.

Yet, despite his desolate situation and the distressing news from his own country, my companion had a power (which I often envied him) of laying aside his misery and diverting himself with dancing and music. I have seen these light-

¹ Mr. Fanshawe's original narrative furnished examples of the detestable and inhuman barbarities inflicted upon the helpless peasantry, which, being of too distressing a nature to justify publication, and indeed of an almost incredible atrocity, we have taken the responsibility of suppressing. Eds.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

hearted and light-heeled fellows tempted by the excellence of a newly-laid barn floor to practise their steps, and having once begun they would jig untiringly to no better music than a comrade's "lalling," as their word for it is.

In singing, too, they greatly excelled any English labouring men I ever met with, for whereas one of our yokels rarely sings except in his cups, these Irish possessed a number of excellent marching songs which helped us along the road. Of those which, being in their own language, I understood not a word, but which they the more delighted in, were two called "Garry Owen" and "Shan-van-Voght." Some of these songs went to the wildest, sweetest, and most melancholy airs in the world, and I wondered at the time that these had not been collected and harmonised, and have heard since that this has been done, and several of them set to English words by Mr. Moore.

These poor fellows had about them a wildness of appearance and behaviour, and a certain haste and inconsequence at once diverting and startling. Thus, one of my companions having put his hat, or *cawbeen*, by which he set great store, upon a gate-post beside which he lay to sleep, sprang up at midnight, and mistaking it for an enemy, dealt it a desperate cut with his hook, and, perceiving his mistake, gave praise to God that he had taken it off before lying down: "For," said he, "had my head been in that hat, 'tis ten to one I had laid it open with my hook, and 'tis a dead man I would have been seein' mesilf at this minute." Yet, with all their childishness, I preferred their society to that of the English gangs, for they were of chaste speech and behaviour, and sober with me, whatever their habit may be when at home.

That they conceived an affection for me out of proportion to my deserts I was presently sensible, for not only were they persuaded from our first meeting that I was a gentleman, and as such entertained for me a singular respect; but, on the night I

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

parted from their company, one of them took me aside, and speaking for the rest, said that they all were sure that I was of the old blood, and, like themselves, unjustly used, and that the harvest being over, and they about to depart into Ireland, could conveniently oblige me in anything I had a mind to.

Coming from creatures so destitute, this mightily touched me, and I civilly thanked them but would take nothing from them, which seemed rather to disappoint than to relieve their hearts, and after whispering a while together their leader bade me think again, for "*Was there no wan I would like put out of the way?*" When at length convinced that not even in this manner could they serve me, he of them that had the most English made a leg that would have done no discredit to Mr. Kean, and, removing his hat, desired that "The Omnipotence of Divinity might kape me in shalubrity."

These poor fellows had many cant sayings among themselves which no Englishmen who worked with them understood. One such, I remember, a man would use to another who offered unneeded help, and made as if to claim a share of luck he had not earned. To such a one would be said "*G'way wid ye' and kill a Hessian ye'silf!*" This I learned from my comrade had its beginning in an affair near Wicklow, wherein a squadron of German hussars, freshly disembarked and ignorant of the country, being surprised in a boreen, or hollow lane between walls, were there destroyed to the last man by the country folk. It was whilst stripping the bodies of these unfortunate aliens that the victors were disturbed by the up-coming of neighbours who had held aloof from the action, but desired to divide the spoils, and to these was first used the phrase which has as, I hear, passed into a proverb in that country.

But to my story. I have said that my comrade had news upon the road which he told me secretly at night. It was upon an evening in September that I learned from him of a battle

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

which had been won by his cause at a place called Castlebar, he assuring me in a whisper of the landing and success of the French and the rout of a large body of red-coats. "They flid loike mountain hares, me son! The dray-goons lid the field, bein' mounted men, and be jabers, they rode loike as if the divil himsilf was afther thim. Sivinity miles they gallopped without wance lookin' over their showlders, and niver spared the ground-ash ontill they got sight o' Athlone! 'Twas a merrycle of a retrate indade, an' 'tis a sorrowful man I am this minute to have missed the seeing of it."

"What regiment would that be? Did ye hear?" said I.

"The Fifth Dray-goons," said he, "or the *Carry-boy-neers* as some calls 'em," and I felt the blood fly to my face in the darkness, for I had reckoned myself as on the strength of that regiment too many years to hear it defamed without grief.

But the dismal tale was true in substance at least; the story is now sufficiently stale.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

WHITE MAGIC

IT was whilst companying with these exiles (an exile myself from my family and station, and so drawn the more to these sad-hearted creatures), that a thing came under my cognisance which I know not how to estimate, since, although it actually occurred, or perhaps I should say was permitted, it was contrary to the commands of Almighty God as revealed in Holy Scripture, and is also repugnant to human reason.

It befell in this wise. We had fagged beans all day with the hook in a great heat and closeness upon a farm by Church Fenton. Towards sunset thunder rolled, the clouds broke, and we were driven with wet jackets to our night's shelter under a thatched tallatt, closed upon three sides, but upon the fourth open to the weather. Here, having with pains and much precaution made a small fire and boiled some of the beans which we shelled with our hands, some five poor Irish and I were preparing to spend the night uncomfortably, for a wind had risen, and the drip from the eaves was continually blown in.

Whilst considering at which end of the place we would lie we were approached by a party of gypsies — three females and a young boy — imploring leave to share our shelter, since their own fire had been put out and their tent blown down.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

I fear that the natural repugnance of a gentleman to the proximity of these vagabonds would have dictated a grudging reply, but my comrades were beforehand with me, and making what blaze they could, proffered hospitality to creatures poorer and more wretched even than themselves, and equally without a country of their own. I profess it did my heart good to observe the mutual respects established between people almost ignorant of one another's tongues, but with a common need and a common knowledge of the shifts of the wayfarer.

Foreshadowed with their labours my Irish were presently snoring, but I, restlessly awake, watched the play of black, beady eyes and the dank coils of hair let down to dry before the blaze. The weather worsened without; seldom have I seen heavier or steadier rain. When the wind fell the light of the fire shone upon the underside of the sheet of water which poured from the eaves, throwing upon this glistening curtain the distorted and wavering shadows of those between it and the blaze.

I had closed my eyes for a while, but reopened them at the sound of a fresh voice, to find a fourth female crouching beside our guests, attempting, as it seemed, to engage them upon her behalf. What she desired I could imperfectly understand, but presently the oldest woman, to whom her petition seemed addressed, demurred upon the score of our presence. "Gorgios," answered the suppliant, "five Pats and a shy covey, and all snoring: go along, mother!"

I profess I had not spoken, but this person had by some means detected a distinction between my company and myself.

Presently the hag poured into a cup from a small phial what I took to be quicksilver, and arousing the boy bade him watch it intently, holding the while in his hands a man's waistcoat which the last comer had brought with her. The boy stared into the cup, the beldame whispered and moaned.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

"My man! my man! see him, honey! see me my man!" entreated the visitor.

Then the boy gazing fixedly upon the bright metal cried low that he saw a thick mist and a drove of horses at a stand and feeding between three ricks in a dark meadow. ("Yes, he was with horses, that is right, what else?" cried the postulant.)

Next the boy turning the rag averred that he saw people, and described a tall man with ear-rings and a red cloth tied about his throat. "*Lea! Lea!*" gasped the listener, and fell a-choking, until chidden and stilled by the others in undertones. I felt my flesh creep and a tingling amidst the roots of my hair. "They be fighting," said the boy, "the tall man has a little 'un down and be a-basting 'un about the chops. Ah! — a foul blow! behind here!" . . . "*What's that? speak!*" "Hush! keep still, woman; let him see! will ye?" " 'Twas a small man did it," said the boy, "I can't see his face. No, not him as was down; that 'un is up again and a-holdin' his ear, so. The tall man is a-lying down upon the hay; he has a-put his hands out, so. They leave him there. The horses go off two and two." "*And Lea?*" "The tall 'un is still a-lyin' down. The red cloth has a-worked round to the back and covers his poll."

At this the boy gave the cup to his granny, hid his face, and began to cry quietly. It being plain that no more was to be had from him he was let lie down again, and the four were still squatted muttering over the failing brands, when I too, after much wondering, fell asleep.

It was in this same shelter, and I think upon the following day (for the weather held us bound there half a week), that I witnessed a strange piece of knavery, little thinking that the experience of it, which disgusted me at the time, would ever serve me and mine in after life.

Two little wizened gypsies of the tribe drew in for shelter, and being roughly forbidden by the farmer in fear for his

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

thatch to light their fire, were debarred their tinkering, and so, falling to arts needing no heat, made beneath my very eyes three sets of loaded dice, drilling and filling with lead the faces opposite those pricked with six holes, until the dies, skilfully handled, would give the double-six thrice out of four throws. This done they sate practising their rogueries, each in turn posturing as the pigeon, and watching how well or ill his mate substituted the false dice for the true, when his turn to throw recurred.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY

GOD REMEMBERS ME

THAT the news of the disgrace of my old regiment should have preyed upon my spirits as it did may seem a thing against nature, nor can I myself sufficiently explain it, save that coming upon me at a time when I was weakened by excessive toil during a fortnight of unseasonable heat it found me susceptible to injurious influences.

The night after hearing of the disgrace and ruin of my country — (for so I conceived it; the glorious progress and prosperous conclusion of the war with the Revolution being then hidden from all, and Englishmen miserably accustomed to seeing their armies beaten upon whatever field they fought, as had happened for thirty years) — the night, I say, after getting this news, rain fell, and I, lying wet, took a chill, sickened, and found myself daily less able for my work. My mind seemed clouded with a presage of misery, my joints ached, my limbs grew unnaturally heavy. I loathed the coarse food which was all that my means afforded me, and feeling assured the end of my days was at hand, determined to betake myself to the nearest town.

My gorge rose against the bestial monotony of my toil; I would die a gentleman; and, having a sudden and inordinate craving for news come upon me, determined that if I could

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

considered that my absence might embarrass efforts on my behalf.

I would punish my friends for casting me off by serving them in the same way in turn, and had pictured myself sought for and entreated. I had kept (in imagination) my proud reserve, maintained my innocence, and only upon strong persuasion, and upon my own terms, had consented to resume my position in His Majesty's service !

In a word, I had shewn myself as headstrong and ill-conditioned a young cub as you shall find in a long life's intercourse with sinful humanity.

Such had been my scheme: but it was crossed, and I a ruined man before I had well begun my life, innocently involved in the ignominy of the one unworthy regiment in His Majesty's forces, disgraced forever and undone.

My head throbbed, my cough shook me; it did not seem worth while to go on like this. Gradually a purpose and plan formed within me. I played with it a while, put it from me, only to find it returning the stronger and reinforced with better arguments.

I paid my score, gave money to the crippled soldier, and passing out into the foggy dusk found a barber's shop by its pole and dish, and spent my last coin in getting a clean shave. The remembrance of the blue stubbly cheek of the dead gypsy had recurred to me; I would at least look a gentleman.

Knowing the city fairly I made my way toward the river where I thought it most secluded. The cobble stones of the Market Place gleamed dimly where a train-oil lamp hung; elsewhere it was dangerous walking. Bleak Street was better lit, for every window of the Mansion House blazed, and by the footmen and link-boys I guessed some feast was forward. Lendal was as the mouth of a cavern, a cold that chilled, a darkness that might be felt. The river fog had invaded this narrow

CHAPTER TWENTY

thoroughfare and filled it from end to end. Keeping to my right I felt my way step by step along the house fronts until a horse-block caught my instep and brought me to the ground. I rose weakly, blinded by a sudden brilliance. The door of the house upon the steps of which I had fallen was closing behind a gentleman who descended, heavily cloaked and halting upon a cane, lighted by his footmen with links. His face was in darkness, and so thick was the night and so murky the way, he had near fallen over me as I rose. My getting to my feet and his descent brought both faces within the circle of light. The countenance I saw was the countenance of my father, but sterner, paler and sharper, yet, for one moment I thought it was he, and I doubt not betrayed recognition. On his part the gentleman regarded me with a sudden displeasure and surprise. "What d'ye want, sirrah?" The voice was not my father's, and even as he spoke his eye contracted, the light in it shifting as it passed from my face to my coarse clothing, and remarked my air of want and toil. He stood gazing upon me for a moment supported by his cane. "I beg your pardon, my man, you startled me. Is . . . is there —" he hesitated, and some compunction moving him, added with a ring of feeling, "You seem in need of relief: take this." He dipped in his fob and proffered me silver.

But I, who thought myself beyond help of my kind, answered never a word; I knew who the man must be, and would take nothing from his hands, so stepping from the causeway to the kennel, I let him and his men pass, and crossing the lane thrust on faster into the thick darkness, seeking an entry I remembered leading down to a paved court with trees, bounded by a low parapet wall, pierced by stone steps descending to deep water. It was a pretty place enough in summer I make no doubt, and used by boating parties and the Lendal ferry-men, but upon an autumn night would be lonely enough for my purpose.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

I found the entry, the vault gave back my footfall, I heard the fog dripping from the boughs of the trees in the court and the water lapping at the stairs. Here was the place, the end of my travels. I had but to leap far enough, for I could not swim; 'twould be at the worst but a three minutes' matter of cold and distress, and then the long sleep or some new illumination and a fresh start.

I clenched my hands for the run and spoke beneath my breath, "Oh God, if there be a God, give me a better chance next time!"

"*He will, He does!*" a man's voice replied, a man's form barred my way, his face close to mine, his warm breath upon my cold cheek, his hand against my breast.

I caught my breath with a sob, but the life in me had run too low for starting. I had gone apart from my kind as a dying beast leaves the herd, and thought myself utterly alone. The presence of another took me mightily aback. I think I staggered as from a buffet, a movement which the stranger misunderstood, for his hands tightened upon my coat. Mine dropt, I stood thus, shaking, bewildered, my mind spinning wearily like a drunken top. As for what this stranger had said I made nothing of it as yet; it was his being where he was that so wholly confused and unmanned me. I had made, as I thought, my adieux to the world, and was unprepared with an answer, and ere I had opened my lips he was speaking again, quietly and low, and with a relish of happiness in his tone, as a man might who had done what he had set out to do. "Thou art the one I am sent for. Thou art to come with me," he said in a tone of gentle but absolute conviction.

"Who are ye!" I gasped, as amazed and changed as if I had already plunged and reached a fresh world.

"I am a friend; thy friend. Thou canst believe so much? I was sent to this city and to this place to meet thee. Wilt thou believe that too?"

CHAPTER TWENTY

"No, that cannot be," said I, "though I think you mean truly and mean well. I was to die here. I'll not deny it, and you overheard me, too; but no soul knew my resolve, not God Himself, for if there be a God He has long forgotten me."

"No, no, indeed thou art wrong: listen, and then judge for thyself. My home is fifteen miles from here. We are millers. I was at my business this afternoon when a voice said to me clearly '*Ride west!*' I looked around thinking my father had spoken, but the room was empty, and he and the men in the wheel-house, So I stayed my work and listened, and again the voice said '*Ride west!*' and at that I rose and went to the house and told my mother, who bade me rest a while with her in silence; and when a third time I was bidden she bade make ready something for me to eat whilst I put-to the horse. 'It may be,' said she, 'this is to try thy faith, or it may be thy Heavenly Father is sending thee to bring to Him one that is lost.'"

"So I ate and got into the gig, and my mother watched me go."

"But how came you here, and now?" I whispered, a great awe coming over me, such as I had never felt; for in all my previous religious experience it was I who had striven and sought and yearned for the great veiled Deity, terribly distant and inscrutable; but, if what this man said were true, it was the Unknown God (although neglected and defied) Who had followed and found me!

The young man was holding my hands, there was warmth and comfort in the touch, and when he spoke again his voice was pleasant and as honest as the note of a bell.

"I let the horse take his own pace," he said, "for I had no light upon my journey, whether the miles would be many or few; so driving in the afternoon without haste I saw against the sunset the minster towers, and then the rain began and I entered the city by Monk Bar and stabled the horse with a

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

friend. But I could not eat nor rest for my concern, so I walked slowly, and waiting upon the Lord, until by streets and lanes that in this fog I know not by name, I was led to this place, and, finding no outlet, I stayed."

"And have ye waited for me long?"

"Not a minute, as I think," said he, "for hardly had I made out the river wall and this stair when I heard thy feet in the entry and knew that I had come not in vain. And now?" he asked and waited.

"*God has not forgotten me!*" I cried, and fell upon my knees on the wet stones and wept as though I were again a child.

He stood over me, still holding my hands. Great was his patience and womanlike his gentleness. "Thou hast no home? Then let us be going. No, do not be at any pains to explain: say nothing; but, if thou wilt be advised, be giving thanks to Him whom thou hast found at last, although He has never lost thee."

So saying, he raised me and gave me his arm, and had me through the black, fog-bound streets to the house of some people of his persuasion, Moorhouse by name, whose pie-shop stands on the south side of the street, midway between Bootham Bar and the Shambles. This man and his wife, plain clean people of the gentlest address and of incredibly few words, accepted me, a wet and ragged wayfarer, plastered with the mud of thirty miles of turnpike, as though I had been some person of distinction.

A room with a double bed (my mind misgives me that it was their own) was made over to my preserver and me; where a tub of hot water set upon a sheet, soap and plentiful towelling, let me feel once more the delight of a clean skin. The sight of that great, soft, white bed filled me with homely emotions. The swift passage of a bright warming-pan between newly-spread sheets, the snowy pillow-case, its creases fresh from the press, all smacked of my old life.

CHAPTER TWENTY

But even these pleasures palled beneath the load of weariness that weighed me down. My friend, whose name I had not yet asked, so incurious had I grown, flitted silently in and out with all that I needed, was upon his knees one minute with flint and steel assisting the birth of a fire, and the next was at my bedside with a bowl of hot broth from below, and when I had taken this down, what did he but put out the light and sit beside me through hour after hour of silent darkness, holding my hand? I dozed or waked with a cry, but always found him there. Once when midnight boomed from the minster near at hand I asked what day it was. "The first of tenth month," said he, "October, as thou wouldst say. A new day for thee, my friend, and the beginning of a new life," and added a text which had been a favourite with Mr. Baxter, "*This month shall be unto you the beginning of months.*"

"That may well be, since God has not forgotten me!" I said, and slept, he still holding my hand.

For the next ten days I lay aching and turning myself from side to side, as one or the other posture became unbearable or gave promise of relief. Nor was my mind yet at rest, for, although whilst waking I hugged to my heart with wonder and gratitude this new sense of God's fatherly care for me, yet no sooner did I drop into an uneasy doze than I was presently struggling in the cold water, and felt the hands of fiends upon my legs dragging me down.

My hosts dosed me with herb tea and possets, heaping clothes upon me and keeping up a fire to promote sweating, but the hallucination lay deeper and yielded only to my friend's treatment. He taught me a text, and bade me fall asleep with it upon my lips; it was this:—

"I will lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord only makest me to dwell in safety."

Moreover, he would attend me whilst I slept, nor do I think

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

he left the house during those ten days and nights, but was almost constant at my bedside, measuring off my potions, rubbing oils into my joints to allay the pains, feeding me and entertaining me with such speech as I could bear.

Upon the evening of the ninth day I was easier and more my own man again, and, before sleeping, besought him to consider himself (which showed my convalescence, for sickness is naturally selfish). "What is it like outside?" I asked, feeling a renewal of interest in the world I had so nearly left. "Wet and very thick," said he, "but 'twill mend by the morning, I think, and to-morrow we will travel if thou art well enough!" I smiled weakly and slept. All he did was right, I felt.

When I awoke it was broad daylight; my friend was gone. I doubt if he had taken off his clothes all night.

Much refreshed, I looked about me intending to rise. My foul rags had vanished — up the kitchen chimney, I suspect; they were indeed past mending with hard usage in all weathers, and the rough washing I was used to give them on Sundays. The poor contents of the pockets, a knife and some papers, lay upon a stool. Upon the bedside chair I found a complete outfit from my host's wardrobe, and he being a tall man I had naught to complain of as to size, nor was I disposed to quarrel with cut and colour, although thus converted at short notice to Quakerism — so far as outward seeming.

"Hoo doost?" asked my kindly, unsmiling hostess, at my bedside, "Wilt raise, or tak tha bit a-bed?"

I would put her to no such trouble and was quickly downstairs. Her husband and she had already eaten, as had my friend, whom they spoke of as Abel ("Abel's a-wattering t' horse"). With one eye upon the shop they waited upon me hand and foot, and could not do enough for me to satisfy their passion for service.

"Madam!" I cried at length, when I could eat and drink no

CHAPTER TWENTY

more, and, though myself contented, had plainly failed to content them; "madam, for whom then do ye take me, that ye treat me so?"

"For a stra-anger, surely," said she.

"Yes, yes, '*for I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me. I was an-hungered and ye gave me meat,*'" and at that word I choked and sat back with swimming eyes, and features all a-work, for I was yet weak and shaken.

"Eh, thou knows t'scripture, doost tha? 'Tis a good knowledge. Doost know this, '*Wherewithal shall a yoong man cleanse his waay?*' 'T'knows t'answer, mebbe?"

"I do," said I, and, unwilling to let these good creatures think worse of me than the truth, I added, "'Twas not ill-living brought me to this, madam; I was stricken down whilst harvesting."

"Sāay na more, lāad; tha Father in Heaven's tha joodge, not I, who'm nobbut a poor creature, and as full of infirmity as thaself. Where's tha moother?"

But at this moment her husband put in his head saying the horse was at the door, and wrapping me against the wind in a great whitey-brown frieze driving-coat, which "Abel" undertook to return when next he called for orders, we took our places.

"Stick to Abel here, and thou'll't not go far amiss!" said that man of few words, my host, giving me his hand with a large simple gesture.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

MY SECOND HOME

OF the driving away from York city I remember but one scene, and that at our setting forth. My companion must needs pull up at a street's end, (or *gate's* end, as they say in the north) to let pass a string of carts moving slowly in the midst of a disorderly crowd with much yelling. "These will be the criminals sentenced to the lash," said Abel, "their journey around the city begins at Whipma-Whopma Gate; poor things!"

"Then the autumn assizes are over," I remarked, and the sorry sight impressed the fact and the date upon my memory as will appear later.

You will not have failed to observe that the constant result of emotion, whether acutely painful or pleasurable, is a period of depression during which one has but limited power of sensation. Nature cannot live for long at its extreme, and exacts repose commensurate with its exertion.

So, here was I, who for weeks past had overtaxed body and mind, sitting vacant and passive beside a man whose Christian name sufficed me, being taken I knew not whither, to what persons or purposes I cared not to know. Only across the grey background of a jaded spirit floated at intervals a soft little face, a face with compressed red lips and great grey eyes gazing

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

straight into mine with an air of unconscious interest and kindness. It was the face that had haunted me all the summer through, that had come between me and the alehouse door, aye, and worse. I would not sully that sweet image of childish holiness. To me that little face had stood for much that his saint's picture stands for to the Papist. "God is very high and very far off," says he, "but Saint Brigid is human, and loving, and near!" So I, having lost my God, had kept my faith true to the best thing He had made.

Why the little face should concede me more of its company to-day, and upon this road, and with this companion, than upon the ways and with the wayfarers of past weeks, I did not tax a wearied head to enquire. What was the clue — the connection? Was it the horse — a strawberry roan? I recalled passages in my past life — my head warned me off. No thinking! She was with me: 'twas enough.

I travelled as in a waking dream through the wide green plain of York; a sameness of pastures from which the Tees-water oxen were beginning to oust the brindled longhorns, as these a century earlier had ousted the black native breed. Endless checquer-work of high blackthorn hedges slid past us, intersecting the green expanse, as we rolled on towards the edge of the low hills north-westward, my comrade as silent as myself.

Never had I companied with so young a man with such a command of silence. Once and again leaning back in my seat I saw from the tail of my eye that he was little if at all my senior. He seemed lightly built, dark, and beneath the middle height, with fine, pale, clear-cut features, grave and steadfast in expression, a little sad perhaps, as are the faces of those who have lost a friend.

All which afforded me food for lazy reverie, if not for words, out of which listlessness I was roused by our coming to a hamlet

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

among more broken or rolling country. An ivied, ill-kept church, and houses of various degrees: a forge, an inn, came successively into view; a parish boundary-stone told me this was Milton-on-Derwent, to which in further testimony a grey, four-square building appeared, a mill astride its river. A farm-steading and house stood near amidst yew hedges and yellowing garden-trees, through which we drove to a porch. This then was our journey's end.

I roused myself and was about to speak; my friend turned to me a face lit with brotherliness, his lips parted for speech, but, as the wheels stayed, the house-door opened, and framed against the darkness within stood a young girl whose face was the face of my dreams, the face that I had bashfully and privily perused as I stood at the horse's head in Ouseby Street, the face which I had seen set in terror and melted in gentle thankfulness. But, how came she here? This riddle was not long in the reading, for close behind her pressed none other than Mr. Ellwood.

"Father, we have come home," said Mr. Abel and lighted down. His father shewed no surprise; saying somewhat in an undertone to his daughter, whose eyes shone in her head with intelligence, he gently dismissed her to her preparations, and approached me with the deliberate frankness that marks the best of his sect. Browner I was, and leaner, but he knew me at once. "We owe thee much my friend, George — is it not? We make thee welcome here." He took my hand and with the finest courtesies led me in and assisted me — cramped with long sitting in the cold — to unwrap. He asked no questions, but set me beside a fire until some meal should be spread, and, having in the meantime, as I suppose, learnt something of my ill-health and destitution, made me for the time — incredible as it may seem, one of his household.

The lady of the house, to whom I was presented later, was

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

an invalid, almost confined to her wheeled chair, but as free from valetudinarian whims and ways as the soundest woman alive. Her hands were never idle, and her mind unceasingly at work for others.

Her daughter, Miss Phoebe, my little mistress, as I soon learned to call her, was feet, hands, ears and eyes to her mother's infirmity; her's were the softest tongue, the deftest fingers, the lightest heels of any that ever I have encountered in all the long span of my life. God bless her!

So, too, did my friend, Abel, serve his father; what forethought, silent assiduity, pleasant grace and practical knowledge that finely shaped young head of four-and-twenty contained!

Ah! what a family life was here; such as I had never conceived of. Wise economy went hand in hand with plain abundance. A house furnished and maintained in its every room for cleanly use and nothing for vainglory. All went therein like the touch and kiss and mutual pressure and help of well-fitted gear. How may I hope to show you the sweet, orderly repose, the well-placed confidence, the tacit industry of working hours, the genial relaxations when the day's labour was done? How make you to understand the sense of love and of kindness that pervaded all, the brooding Presence of the Holiest which rested upon that household, little spoken of, never forgotten, always felt?

Before a week was over I found myself established in a lodging hard by, in two rooms of the old mill house, indeed, above the office, and next door to Jeacocke, the foreman, whose wife seemed well pleased to do all for me that I needed. My breakfast and midday meal — (which we called dinner and you call luncheon) — I took in my room, my supper was always eaten at my master's table, in whose house I was free to spend my evenings and my *First Days*, as the Friends call Sunday.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

At that table, under the evening lamp, my education was completed, or more truly begun, for little of all I had previously learned made for either my wisdom or happiness. With the clearing of the supper-board dawned the brightest hours of the day. Our business was resolutely laid aside, and some good book read aloud by the men in turn, whilst the ladies' needles clicked and the stockings lengthened.

At this exercise — as delightful as it was rational — I essayed to bear my part, but not even the gentle forbearance of my audience could hide from me that my apprehension and delivery were a wrong to the author and a grief to their ears. Returning the book to Abel with inward mortification, I formed a resolve which my mistresses discovering helped me to put into execution.

Such nights of the week as my masters lay from home upon their journeys were devoted to my instruction. I, book in hand, read prose or declaimed verse beneath the eyes of kindly tutors, Mrs. Ellwood smiling approval or censure from her wheel-chair; whilst Phoebe sat or stood beside me whispering hints and corrections, and schooling me by play of hand and head and inclination of supple young body in the primary arts of elocution.

"Chin up, George!" (her finger was beneath it). "Shoulders back, so! thou art poking sadly; no, *not* hand in pocket, but thus, extended gracefully; book held lightly in left, now begin afresh."

Both these ladies read and spoke with a naturalness and pleasant gravity which was a perpetual wonder and delight to me; an accomplishment common among the Friends, who devote the time which we lose amid the intricacies of dead languages to acquiring a mastery over their own.

"Oh, I shall never, *never* prove a reader!" I cried once in despair, "and as for making a speech — !"

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

"Then how wilt thou get thyself a wife?" asked my little mistress demurely. "When that time comes to one of our men he has to rise in full meeting and taking his intended by the hand, so, he says — may I tell him, mother? — 'In the fear of the Lord and the presence of this assembly I take this my friend' (whatever her name is) 'to be my wife, promising, by Divine assistance, to be unto her a faithful and loving husband until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us!'"

She stood a-tiptoe, holding my hand as she recited this declaration, facing her mother and giving the appropriate emphasis to each clause, acting her part as groom to my seventy-five inches of embarrassed maidenhood, the quaintest, most innocent piece of unconscious humour in the world. "After I have finished comes thy turn: thou promises all that a wife should promise, and then we sign our names to the marriage certificate and so we are married — just think! That's all! Isn't it simple? All but the little speeches, and I always must pity the man, he has to break the silence — speaks first, thou sees. After the signing we sit" (she released my fingers), "the meeting is quietly gathered, and after a pause some minister revives a passage of Scripture or appears in prayer."

"Is this so?" I asked in amazement; Mrs. Ellwood nodded smiling, her eyes full of happy memories. Upon this we fell to talking of Quaker weddings and Quaker ways until my school hour had slipped away.

In such hands the veriest dunce had discovered parts, and I, who was bent upon succeeding, succeeded. One night when Abel, a little husky from facing an east wind, laid down Addison, my mistress motioned to me, and putting from my knee the great house-cat, Moses, (so named by Abel, who had drawn him from the Derwent in early kittenhood), arising I read.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

My host listened with wonder and pleasure, and it is to be supposed that some gesture recalling my younger tutor, her father pinched a rosy ear where she sat beside him smiling with glee. "Thou hast ploughed with my heifer, friend George," said he, a quotation I sought later and smiled upon when I found.

Here then, I made first acquaintance with the literature of my own tongue, the poetry and prose of its great secular authors.

At Ouseby, one subject and one only had engrossed the hours snatched from business, and our lives had been divided between a breathless scramble for money and enthusiastic religious exercises.

At Milton little was said about religion, so little that at first I awaited apprehensively what I doubted not was but postponed; later I wondered, but still the expected catechising delayed. In place of this I heard the sonorous roll of John Milton's blank verse, the more nimble genius of Mr. Cowper, and Gibbon's story of the fall of Rome.

My masters would at times read us something from the news, but the tidings of those months were bloody tidings, wars and rumours of wars, and these were men of peace.

At the stroke of half-past nine my little mistress would lay the Book of Books before her father, and he, having selected and read the day's portion, bent his head for a devotional pause of some fifteen seconds. This closed the evening's exercise; this was all: less than a dozen times during eight months of intimacy did I *see* him kneel in prayer, but I was not misled by the absence of ritual, for the Presence silently invoked was with the household to aid and bless as effectually as if approached with clamour and emotion.

Here, too, I learned to think of a bird as something else than a mark for a gun, and a wild plant as something other than a weed for the burning.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

White's "Selborne" we read with delight, and the plates in the earlier volumes of Donovan's "British Birds" were frequently referred to.

My little mistress would weary her head with working out the species of flowers after the system of Linnaeus — a method disapproved by her father, who was, I believe, an excellent botanist with views of his own.

It was at one of these evening discussions that he indulged us with one of the few jests of his that I recall: "And this *Matronalis*, Phoebe, that thou finds in the vicarage hedge, how can it then be *inditchenous*?" The child sitting upon the arm of his elbow chair, nibbled her father's ear and both laughed like lovers. Never in my life had I seen such innocent freedoms and mutual delights in one another's society between parent and child.

On Sunday — First Day, in the quaint jargon of that sect — I was had with them to their meeting-house at Coatesby, a village some three miles distant, and there made acquaintance with the strange and intense silence of Quaker worship.

Thus in all things was I treated as one of this kindly household, nor was any question asked as to my past history, my profession, beliefs, family or prospects, nor was any limit suggested to my stay.

In return for all this, what could I do? This question was with me from the first day, nor became less urgent as the singular benevolence of my hosts continued. The weight of obligation bade fair to oppress me, but my masters seemed as unconscious of their kindness as most men are of their selfishness, and such thought as they spent upon me had only my welfare for its object.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

I BECOME A JOURNEYMAN MILLER

I MUST have been lower in myself than I knew, and for a month after my settling at Milton laboured under a depression and lassitude that I could in no wise shake off. This my forbearing masters (or, rather, should not I call then hosts than masters) seemed sensible of, and by providing me with such tasks as I was able for, maintained in me that self-respect which losing, a man loses all.

Neglected as was my education, it was erudition compared to that of their journeymen millers, and I was thankful to find myself useful in the simple walks of tallies and book-keeping; thankful, too, to betake me to my sack-needle again and employ myself in darning and patching. At this work I would sit in a quiet alcove behind the boulding-hopper in company with Old Widdas, a pensioner of my employer's, a man able for this light handicraft, but past all else; once a lion of a fellow, now all-but a ghost. This poor old gaffer, whose mumbled, toothless speech, was hard for me to follow, was so aged as to have clean forgotten the date of his birth, if he had ever known it, but was able by reference to certain landmarks in the wide landscape of his life, to speak to events long past, and sometimes seemed to me, sitting beside him, a kind of tangible, vocal manuscript, antique and dry and fallow as

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

crumpled vellum. Thus, the incoming of the first George had fixed itself in his baby-head through some accident with a tar-barrel, and the bursting of an overcharged blunderbuss, fired in the spirit of loyalty, but costing a neighbour his thumb. His father, (dead and buried some seventy-five years) had been called out and kept under arms all night (as his son well remembered), to resist an expected rising of the Papists, or "Whites," as he called the Jacobites, doubtless from their favours, the Hanoverian cockade being black, as we all know.

It is a common word that tho' being rich is pleasant enough, the growing richer is more pleasant still; and this rule holds in other things, as the regaining of one's strength after a sickness, for instance, which (as I now found) was a daily delight, arms and legs crying out to be used, and finding an added pleasure in labouring for such kindly masters as the Ellwoods.

Well do I remember the day upon which I found myself a full man again. It was a showery morning, and I, within doors, toiling up and down a mutinous column of figures, glanced through the leaded panes at a press of wagons waiting their turns for unloading. Thinks I, "'Tis a pity to toughen dry Red Lammas," so, whipping off jacket and waistcoat, I had a tail-board down and a sack of wheat upon my shoulder just as the rain began. "Where will ye have it, Jeacocke?" I bawled to the foreman miller; "Heart, alive!" cried he, "have a care of breaking of your back, sir: tääke it within-side the mill out o' the wat, if ye can get so far." To the job I went in a pelting shower amidst encouraging laughter from the journey-men and carters, who fancied this my first essay as porterage, but soon thought otherwise. After this beginning it was "George!" here and "George!" there, and no sooner was I set to my clerking than one or another would put a head within with, "Could ye lend us a hand at stacking offals," or "The

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

bells are warning for trimming the wheats, sir, and we be sorely short-handed." Had I been one of themselves they had certainly forbidden me the mill for lacking indentures of apprenticeship, but all in some manner recognized a difference in degree, and either as Mr. Abel's friend, or as "Gentleman George" welcomed me as workmate or playmate.

At these labours (though not as yet at the more delicate arts of stone-dressing and tending the spouts) I became fairly expert, and put on muscle to my amazement, so that it was sport to me to raise a fifty-six pounds' weight by my little finger hooked through its ringle, or to clap two such above my head, lifting them fairly and slowly without a swing. Neither feat, be it said, is a thing to boast of, but merely the ordinary play of good men.

All which, added to my experience with the harvest-men, gained me some knowledge of the life of common people, a knowledge at which my younger relations may permit themselves to smile, but which I prize upon two accounts, for not only has it served me well through a long life in my dealings with my social inferiors, but it was at the time, and since, good for me to see my fellow-countrymen from the level, and not from the steeple-top, as we men of birth may be said, in a figure, commonly to see them. And thus wearing my domino, myself unread, I found my common fellows by no means all of the dull, same piece I had thought, but differing in dispositions and capacities as widely as ourselves. So much, for instance, did Jeacocke, our surly, taciturn foreman, differ from the slippery, plausible Demas, our spoutsman.

Here, too, at Milton, I was shewn another side of the middle class, dealers and farmers, from that I had been used to see when at Bramford, where the reflected glory of my father's title put every man upon his best behaviour in conversing with me. The loudness, bluntness and frank, one-sided selfishness

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

of these Yorkshiremen frequently surprised me. A bargain between two of them was a match at hard lying and hard swearing; their chicanery and profanity exceeded what I knew of the same class in Suffolk, and made me speculate how my masters held their own in such company.

What I beheld showed me the extraordinary value of character. Let a man be as silent and slow as he may, if the society in which he moves is once persuaded of his integrity, he has in that persuasion a larger capital and more permanent than the less scrupulous possesses in the most plausible energy and daring foresight. My masters were absolutely trusted, and being taciturn men of tried sobriety, had ever their wits about them, moved by rule and made few miscalculations. Their manner and appearance befriended them, and seldom did the roughest "tyke" — (as these Yorkshiremen call themselves) — take with either of them the way of violence and coarseness that he would naturally have taken with his fellow.

As is well known, and as those that dealt with them knew, my masters, as Quakers being bound in conscience to take no oath, were debarred from recovering a debt or defending an unjust claim at the King's Bench. They were indeed as sheep in the midst of wolves, yet they thrived, and by restricting their dealings, except for money down, to those whom they believed they could trust, acquired the best of the trade in their neighbourhood. Deceived they were at times, as I remember, but being held in general esteem for their fair dealing and upright behaviour, those that ill-used them came to be ill-thought of by the country-side, and in the long run lost more than those they defrauded.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE!

ABEL

IT is commonly held that a man has a right to his youth. For what has his Maker given him supple joints and a springing spirit but to enjoy the same within bounds of reason?

But here was my young master as sad, restrained and silent as a widower whose blacks are not yet rusty. That something rested heavily upon him was the common talk of the mill, our freer tongues laying it to unrequited love (though for what lass no two could agree). Whatever it was made no stay to his diligence in business; he shirked nothing, forgot nothing, mismanaged nothing, and was without doubt a master of his trade. His judgment of wheat was a daily marvel to me. By touch, scent and appearance he would foretell not only the weight of the sack before it had come to scale, but the colour and virtue of the flour that it would make, and these forecasts would be justified by the result.

Though smallish and light in the bone, he was wiry and adroit, and at a pinch would get through the work of a bigger man, though commonly reserving himself for command. "My head, George, is worth more to the mill than my hands," he would say smiling, and indeed some pretty ingenious machinery of ours was of his devising, and he was ever changing and

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

perfecting. For instance, it was he who divined that gears cut from a seasoned crab-stock, and well greased had nigh as much proof in them as cast metal: a plan that has by now found favour with every miller in the land, as I should suppose.

Well, as to this grief of his, it was something of a mystery, and I hate a mystery, it is vulgar and it spoils a man for his bed and his victuals; so I put away the thought of it as touching my friend until the fact was fixed in my head by words from his own lips.

One night, as I was getting into my bed, I heard wheels pass beneath my window, and looking forth made out the shape and action of the blood mare, and saw her and the gig she drew turn towards the stables. This would be Mr. Abel returned late from a business journey. We had not awaited him, for it was his night to have lain at Beverley. Slipping on my clothes I ran to the nag-stalls to help him unharness, and going silently in my mill slippers, came suddenly upon him in conversation with my master before they or I were aware. Father and son were standing face to face, the lanthorn held by the elder throwing strong light upon the grave concern of the one and the haggard whiteness of the other. The father spoke, unconscious of my presence.

"Thou wast arrested?"

"On Beverley market, for horse-stealing; the farmer and his son swore hard to me, but the magistrate I was taken before had himself been with me at Malton at the time of the robbery. 'Twas providential."

"Then he is still in the riding?"

"And using the clothes he — took that night. Yes, night or day I am only safe when in the company of good witnesses."

I had no business to have heard anything, nor desire, so

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

fell back silently into the ring of darkness outside the lanthorn's light and presently returned whistling to find my masters forewarned and composed enough to accept my help.

That my friend's sorrow lay heavily upon him I divined by his rare failures of temper and an occasional hardness in his dealings which was foreign to his nature, or rather to his practice: thus, our village postmaster (a person of small repute, who owed his post, or more truly had had the post created for him, in return for back-stairs service to the uncle of the then Lord Mandeville), this man, Isaac Proctor by name, must needs come a-borrowing of my young master upon some pitiful tale of being behindhand with his payments to his chief, and in fear of ruin.

I could see Mr. Abel distrusted the fellow's professions, but presently lent him ten pounds upon his solemn undertaking to return the same in one month. "You'll ne'er see that money again, Abel," said I. "I fear thou art right, George," he replied, adding that the poor man had an unfortunate manner. As it happened we were both wrong, for the borrower repaid his loan to the day with an ostentation of punctual honesty which impressed me as unnatural, but which explained itself three weeks later when he pleaded his previous good faith as a reason for my master lending him fifty pounds. There must have been many softer ways of refusal open, but Abel, being as I believed in inward trouble, took a way unlike himself. "No, Proctor," said he, "thou deceived me once and I'll not trust thee again."

On another night I was waked by singing. A voice which I presently knew for that of our journeyman Demas, was troling a scurrilous old tippling song once popular in the north and called "Duke Wharton's Drinking"; the verses I caught were the last pair of quatrains,

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

*God bless the King, the duchess fat,
And keep the land in peace,
And grant that drunkenness henceforth
'Mong noblemen may cease.*

*And likewise bless our Royal Prince,
The nation's other hope,
And give us grace for to defy
The Devil and the Pope.*

And with that came a pebble against my pane, and foreman Jeacocke calling below, "Coom down, wull ye, Mister Gearge, and len's yer 'and at the spouts, here's this owd fool Demas as droonk as a lord, and I with my hands cluttered up with the job ye know of, and t' watter raisin' every minute."

Down I went to find myself much needed, for by the smell I knew that a pair of stones must be heating. Being full of orders and the river high, we were running the mill all night, but Demas, whose spell began at twelve, had come on duty in no state to be trusted. Yet, while admitting his condition, he was not to be persuaded either to go home or to lie and sleep off his liquor, but followed me from one spout to another whilst I handled and tested the meal pouring hot from the stones, wearying me with his prattle.

"There's some läays it to be a lass, Gearge, but I'm of another opinion. Naw, he's a deep 'un as shall some dääy be seen. 'T'qualet sow gets t' most wash', but, 'Be sure your sins shall find ye out,' is a good motto, as my mother said, and a sore comfort for honest souls like unto you and me, Gearge. Whilst as for *him* — but the less said the better — "

"*A-men!*" said I, only half listening and without an inkling of whom he spake.

"Now what am I to mäake of a yoong mäan as is in two pläaces at once? Eh? tell me thäat! Ye remember the first

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

däay ye coom here? Octō-aber ten. Yes? *You* coom fra' owd York and 'e drove ye, so in a manner o' speakin' ye coomed together; thāat's so. You boath slapt at owd York for more'n a week o' nights afore. So ye said, so 'e said; anywäays ye didn't neither slape here — *thāat's* so. But the last night o' yon — the night afore ye coomed to the pläace wi' 'im, 'e were 'ere *thāat night, I säay, all the säame.*"

"Are ye speaking of Mr. Abel?" He nodded. I laughed in his face. With the sudden anger of the tipsy he seized my arms so firmly that unless I was for parting with my shirt-sleeves, I must needs humour the fool and hear him out.

"Ye laugh? but I'm not laughin'! eh! 'tis no laughin' job, yon. Whāat sort o' mään's yon? a mään as is äable to appear i' pplä-aces f-fifteen mile apart at t' säame time o' night! 'E were 'ere, around t' mill yon night; I see 'im masel, — met him a-leaving't' hoose as I coomed on spell at twelve."

"Gammon, ye blockhead, 'twas wet and thick: ye could not have told sweep from miller, hardly man from woman, that night in York."

"'Twas no such coorse wather 'ereawäay, Gearge, 'twas ha'f a moon and clearing at midnight, aye 'twas so, and I met 't' läad full-fäace wi' t' moon upon 'im, an' 'e knowed I knowed 'im, fur 'e pulled 'is hat ower 'is nose an niver throwed me a word or said 'Night to ye, Demas!' so, when I sees 'im drive ye in next daay, and heerd tell where ye'd coom from, I was fairly strook a'heap."

"Get away home to bed, ye jackass, and let me use my scoop, these troughs are over full," said I, and, loosening his hold, I rolled him in an old boulting-cloth and put a cotchel of bran beneath his head for a pillow. Thus impounded, swathed like a corpse, he slept out the residue of his spell, snoring whiles and sneezing whiles, when his little red nose would be tickled by the mill cats, Jannes and Jambres, so named

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

by Abel because "they withstood Moses," my friend and house-mate.

But some ideas once sown are as hard to eradicate as quitch from pasture, and, do what I would I could not rid myself of the fancy that someone for sport or spite was personating my young master and casting a cloud upon his name and life. And with this thought came remembrance of a coloured drawing of Abel when a boy which hung in his parents' chamber, a room I had once entered at house-cleaning to help in moving the wardrobe; in this picture my young master was depicted in two positions, as if two persons, as a full face and in profile, but, for some cause, the figures were differently draped and the countenances, though counterparts in colouring and feature, had by the art of the draughtsman been given singularly different expressions. If I remember rightly, the artist was one Mr. Benjamin West, an ingenious young American who afterwards enjoyed royal patronage.¹

¹ Mr. Fanshawe was almost certainly mistaken in attributing the picture to Mr. Benjamin West (who was then at the height of his fame and had for years been closely employed upon the Chapel Royal and was elected P.R.A. in 1798). The portrait may possibly have been the work of this person's pupil and relation, Mr. Ephraim West, better known as a painter of animals.—EDS.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE MASTER STAG

THE days shortened, and 1798 dwindled to a close. I awaked to hear the bells of some distant church — (Milton had none then) — ring in the last year but one of the dying century. It was a tremendous time when all that we were used to in the frame of things, orderly sequence, ancestral right, rank, privilege, seemed shaken and like to part under us.

Across the Channel, so near that on clear days the garrison of Dover Castle could distinguish the moving columns and the twinkle of sunlight on the bayonets, the Revolution stood armed to the teeth, was battling fiercely at all points from the Low Countries to Savoy, had won Lombardy, won Egypt, was pouring north through Syria, plainly gaining strength upon a diet of rapine and outrage.

Amid these alarms and the courage of the stiffer sort, the family circle of my kindly hosts enclosed my sequestered life. I awaited quiet and dumb I knew not what of resurrection. It was the winter sleep of the grub in his silken hammock. But in rare moments of self-consciousness I was aware of processes at work within me foreign to Quaker influences and shaping me to other ends than such as they approved.

As for friend Ellwood, he lived his life, a life above the storms.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Abel had relinquished the country rounds, and was much at home now, at work upon some new machine, his father taking the business journeys, near or distant, in all weather and alone. Never did I find him irritable or cast down upon his return, nor deviating from the precise, restrained manner of speech which exactly stated the circumstance without our customary exaggerations.

Our farmer neighbours marvelled at his temerity in travelling country turnpikes lonely and dark, at all hours, unarmed and carrying considerable sums of money. When remonstrated with for his foolhardiness, or rallied upon his immunity from robbery, he would become, as I observed, more than commonly grave.

"One would think, Ellwood, that ye paid scot to the roogs, or had a friend i' the *purfession*," growled a hulking grazier who had himself suffered at the hands of a highwayman. The fellow meant nothing by his sneer, and neither expected nor received a reply, yet did my master's face take on an expression of positive pain at the word for which I found at the time no explanation.

The Continental war increased; our people were restless; Ireland a hell; wheat rose and rose. His confidence never failed; "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee*" was a legend which seemed inwrought upon the stuff of his fine spirit as indelibly as its watermark on paper. Thus stayed, he had leisure from his own to lift their trouble from others.

"George," said he as we walked to meeting one First Day after his return from visiting his southern customers, "thou wilt be glad to hear I have good news from Ouseby at last — I have this for thee." He drew from his pocket a little "housewife" worked in silks and containing needles and buttons and court-plaister; such a thing as a woman makes for a man whom

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

she regards with motherly or sisterly eye. " 'Twas a hard struggle, my friend, but she has come through 'more than conqueror.' She bade me ask thy acceptance of this, and desires thy pardon." I had no words to reply with, and he, kindly covering my enforced silence, went on, "I should be glad of thy company on Fourth Day (Wednesday), Phoebe and I will be walking to Coatesby. 'Tis monthly meeting, and I shall probably sit it out, but Phoebe must not leave her mother too long alone, and will welcome thy escort homewards. The roads grow unsafe: there are many out of work and wandering."

Fourth Day came; "first meeting"—the meeting for worship — was over. Two grey-headed farmer friends with lined cheeks of folded leather and broad white foreheads, who sat side by side at the desk facing the rest of us, had simultaneously opened their eyes, turned to one another and silently shaken hands. It was like the movement of wheel-work figures and never failed to excite my wonder. How they knew one another's minds, and the time of day, was beyond me, for there was no clock within the room.

At sight of the handshake we all drew long breaths and gently felt our limbs; the women-friends upon their side of the house moved slightly and decorously to the same purpose, and certain small whispered arrangements were toward. Those who from youth, feebleness, or want of full membership were not expected to sit out the second (business) meeting arose in silence.

I was of these, and reaching the door first, held it wide for the others. Each thanked me in a whisper: last came my little mistress, who gave me a smile in passing, and having gone forth awaited my coming with the sparkling glee of a child released from school.

The day was fair, one smelt the breaking buds; the com-

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

ing summer seemed nearer by a month than when it halted numbly in the east wind of the previous week.

What a creature she was! All freshness and modesty, unconscious of itself and of sin; an innocence that protected her like an invulnerable armour, from which every evil thought and wish fell quenched and blunted.

The child was fulfilled with the spirit of the spring, and, I am persuaded, would have sung like any bird, had she known how; but among her sect music is clean disregarded and contemned. Yet, knowing not a note or an air, she had learnt the syllables and roundelays of every bird of that country-side and could mimic and beguile some of the creatures to admiration. On clear dark nights the great wood owls would answer her "*boo — boo — boo !!!*" with their ghostly countersign; and her soft whistle would draw the shy bullfinch to the lattice of our summer-house.

Our homeward path was marked for her by a hundred petty natural histories of this and earlier springs. Here her father had once seen an adder sunning himself among the last snow-wreaths of April, and here — "Dost think the robin will have laid yet? the lining was in on First Day, thee knows."

Next it was, "Hark, George! dost hear that? 'Tis the chiffchaff! and this only Third Month seventh. (March 7th). It seems almost impossible: yet, there it is again! A fortnight before its time."

One could see the restless little animal moving among the sallow palms, a pale green pinch of feathers, slipping hither and thither and pausing momentarily to utter its simple plain-song. I caught its shape against the watery blue, gilded and outlined by weak sunshine, and thought I had ne'er seen aught so delicate.

Next it was, "See here, George! What have we here? Dost thou see, great boy, what thou wast just for setting thy foot upon?"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

This was a seal, or footprint, one among a hundred in the toughened mud of a field gateway. I looked; I saw the cloven prints of sheep, the broken ring of a horse-shoe, the flat disc of an unshod colt. There was also the pad of a dog, and I said so. My little mistress laughed clearly, "Certainly that is a dog's foot, but this? look more closely, compare them!"

"They differ somewhat, but what else can it be, Phoebe?"

"Badger! oh, blind boy! and to think thou art one-and-twenty!" she trilled infectionally.

"Badger, Oh!" said I, now interested, "Well, that may be, but how do ye know it, Phoebe?"

"By it's five toes, George, surely. Count Rock's when thou gets home and see how many he has beside his dew-claws, which don't reach to the ground, thou knows."

I looked upon her in wonder. Here was I, a man of the field since I was breeched, and here this maiden child whose understanding of wild things outstript mine at every pace; who knew note of bird and seal of beast, whose eye and ear were rarely at fault, although — or possibly because — she had never seen a gun used in her life.

"When spring really comes," said she, "I will teach thee all the songs, and the call-notes, too, which are harder to keep in mind; and I'll teach thee the flowers' and butterflies' names on First Days, as we walk to meeting, and in the afternoons. See, there is a Large Tortoiseshell, sunning himself on that oak-bole, what a fine fellow!"

I looked, and listened, and looked again, but this time into the coming years, and almost saw myself a gentled, quieted man in drab, walking thus hand-in-hand with my little mistress, grown taller and in a longer frock, all in a sweet spring greenness.

Almost, I saw this, and altogether I was willing to have seen it, and hoped I should be counted worthy, and was girding

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

myself for the years of waiting and the work before this exquisite thing could be.

And then the dream snapped, for something external to the present life, something foreign and smacking wholly of the old had broken in.

The child and I were following a deep hollow lane between banks clothed with hollies and catkinned hazels, and overhung by taller trees whose great roots interlaced and held together the high mossy scarps upon either side. Of these one bounded some park or enclosure and was topped by a stout oak paling, four feet high, solid and good. Behind this, upon the leafy sward overhead, we were aware of pattering feet, and then, without other warning, a great, brown, hairy stag, carrying a mighty head, launched himself sheer over the pales, gathering his limbs in the air before he alighted unhurt before us, stayed for a moment irresolute, staring and blowing strong breath before turning to canter heavily away up the lane.

The next moment two couples of great pied hounds were panting and scrambling upon the woodwork, and they, too, but less lightly, slid or fell into the roadway, laid their noses to it, whined, burst into deep bell-like notes of certainty, and stretched away in a passion of unrelenting pursuit.

Any man who had hunted could see that despite his big leap, the stag was near spent, and must be pulled down within a few minutes unless helped or bayed in an unusually strong place.

My little mistress had gasped with delight at the leap; the appearance and pursuit of the hounds opened her eyes to her hero's peril, and her appeal to me was instant: "Oh, George, don't let them do it; save the poor thing, dear Georgel!" and with sweet feminine unreason she clung to my sleeve.

And with that there was a trampling and sobbing of over-ridden horses, and three men, red-faced and spattered with mire, were leaning over the pales.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"Hi, sir! You, sir! Can ye save the stag? I'll gladly give ye ten guineas!" "Not he, Mandy, the man's unmounted. What cursed luck! 'tis a damnably stiff fence, this. Well! Well!"

I felt for them and for that noble beast, but no man, however well-breathed, can live a mile upon the flat with hounds.

Then, in a moment, I saw a great horse arch its blue-grey neck over the pales as a cob-swan bends before he takes the water, and — how tell it? for the thing seemed impossible and sheer death to a horse — he hove himself grandly over the timber, clearing his hind feet cleverly, and down he came through the hazels, getting all his feet under him and together ere he took the road, his pasterns sharing the strain of that sheer descent to a marvel.

In a word the grand brute knew his work. His great red eye was full of intelligence, his round red nostrils of spirit, he had dropt plumb into the lane from that height as delicately as a cat drops from a sill. His saddle was empty.

The men above had shouted "*Woal!*" when he challenged, swearing he had broken his back; now they cried that it was the luckiest thing in the world, for I had him by the head, and had set my foot to the stirrup.

"A crop!" I cried. "A crop with a thong!" They tossed me three; the one I caught was nine feet of plaited hide and cracker looped to four feet of crab and buck-horn. The grey was moving when I mounted, had broken ere I leant and caught the falling thong, and had got into his stride before I had sorted my reins.

"Well done, sir! Keep him going! *Save the stag!*" they bawled, but their voices faded behind me as I rode.

The grey covered the ground without apparent effort, a long, low action easy to sit and filling me with hope of success, for the chase had little more than two hundred yards start of us, and we moved the faster.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Trust me, I could enlarge upon that run, which was one to remember, for the three miles or so of it lay across some big fences and was as intricate a line as ever a failing stag doubled and twisted over, or horseman rode. Twenty minutes later, when the hunt came up, a field of six with horses blown and bloody with spurring, a hard-beset young man was found making what shift he might single-handed to keep the pack off a stag which had rolled himself up in a sheep-net, but was wholly uninjured.

You will understand that I had to listen to some civil expressions, for the animal, it seemed, was my Lord Mandeville's master stag which had broken park some months since, a beast of note and name, an eighteen pointer, and promised to the King for his Windsor herd.

They had come, they averred, twenty-two miles as the crow flies, and had left twice as many horses beside their road. "And a few men!" laughed a fine, red-faced fellow some years my senior, rubbing his bare head with a bandanna, "Unlucky Fanny! what a thing to miss!"

"Lord! what a horse the man has! Did ye see him take the drop into the lane? Twelve feet sheer, I assure ye!" (It was a fair ten) "And a lot left in him yet!"

All admired the great and splendid animal, saying that he had covered the last fifteen miles unriden, chusing his own line and taking all that came in the same wonderful collected stride. I thought I had never seen so grand a creature. He was what is known as a flea-bitten grey, and stood seventeen hands.

And so, laden with the compliments of these hearty fellows, and taking with me the crop and thong, for so its owner willed, I found my way homeward across the fields wondering with some compunction how my little mistress had fared, thus suddenly deserted by her squire.

But I was no longer the same creature: it was as though

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

some bodily change had taken place within me. Never wholly freed from spiritual condemnations, even after the York Mercy — these had thickened upon me of late, though intermittently. Now they were — for the hour at least — gone! I found myself once more marking the fences as of old, "There would I have it — and there! — and that is my place where the take-off is sound!"

I walked with a longer stride; drew sweeter breath; I thought no more (for the time) of my poor sinful soul and the Second Death. The cloud had lifted. "I am a man after all," I said, "and, depend on't, there's a man's work waiting me somewhere. This primrose time can't last." I pinched my thigh: it was as hard as saddle-leather. Nay, more, something I had from my ancestors, something martial awoke and stirred within me. This new strait garb of Fox and Penn cracked at the seams, as one might say. The trumpets sang in my head; "I shall hear the charge sounded yet," said I, "and look the French in the white o' the eye, please God! and see their horse 'receive the files,' as it always does when ours has the pace in it and is ridden home. No! I'm not meant for a Quaker, they are God's saints without doubt, and I not worthy to open and shut the doors of their meeting-house. And yet —!"

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

MORE OF MY FRIEND ABEL

YOU may believe that I was not exempt from movements of curiosity as to the origins of the singular circle into which I had been introduced, and although I reciprocated the courtesy they extended to my incognito, frequently detected myself piecing together such fragments of their domestic history as I had chanced to discover.

In this respect my hosts were not wilfully secretive; but, as I say, I asked no questions, and it seemed never to occur to them that the topic would interest a stranger.

We of the landed aristocracy are ludicrously sensitive upon this subject, and whilst holding it ill manners to boast our descents at our own or our friend's tables, lose few opportunities of insisting upon them in the form of book-plates, coach panels, effigies, and church windows. It is a point of faith with nineteen out of twenty of us that we "came over with the Conqueror," albeit our names do not stand upon the Battle Abbey roll. The twentieth, more wisely, avers that his ancestors arrived with Hengist, which is likely enough, but equally void of proof.

I once heard my father observe, in a moment of expansive veracity, that not three families of his acquaintance could show evidence of landed estate earlier than the rising of Wat Tyler,

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

the more part being the progeny of ennobled cits, and the proudest of all the descendants of royal bastards.

That my hosts' reticence upon this matter was not due to ignorance I was presently aware. The biography of a collateral ancestor of their name I found pleasant and even diverting reading. The Thomas Ellwood of 1639-1713 was the friend of William Penn, the amanuensis of John Milton, and himself had promptings of the muse with results more laughable than euphonious.

Others of the race had suffered for their faith. The Quakers were abominably persecuted at their earliest appearance and for four generations after. During the first hundred years of the existence of the sect it is said there was never one day during which some member of their body was not in jail for conscience sake. Hundreds perished of prison-fevers, hundreds were ruined in health and estate, and to this noble army of martyrs the Ellwoods had contributed more than one of their name.

And there had been more recent passages. Thus, my little mistress referred once and again to some childish recollection of Edge Garth, from which I gathered that she had not been born at Milton. Jeacocke and the older hands spoke of things which had happened "before Ellwoods time" but, my first clear light upon their past broke when Abel found me examining an old corn-sack branded, "T. ELLWOOD, EDGE GARTH, CHORLEY."

"Dost know those parts, George?" he asked, to which I replied, "Only by name; but by this token your father must have lived there?"

"Yes; until ten years since. We had farmed the Edge for a hundred years; ever since we came north out of Buckinghamshire. But the last life in the lease died."

"And would not your landlord readmit you upon a fine?"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

"'Twas a landlady, George; but I doubt if she knew anything about it. Her agent refused us any terms."

"That seems strange, for as tenants you must always have been better than good."

He smiled grimly. "The person had a prejudice against our Society."

"Unreasonable fool!" said I, warmly; "whose property was it?"

"The Countess of Blakenham's," said he, and went on, not observing my confusion: "It touched my parents closely: to me it mattered less, for I had been at my boarding-school five years and had somewhat lost touch with the place."

"What, were there no holidays at your school — Ackworth, you call it, I think?"

"None. We go at eight or nine and leave at fifteen. Those whose homes are within reach see their parents perhaps twice or thrice a year; but children from the south forget their mothers' faces long before their time is up, and what is stranger, their mothers fail to recognize them when they meet. In my own case there were longish spells when I missed my people badly and might have moped but for the kindness of a fatherly old Friend who then lived near, and was often in and out; Isaac Penington is his name: such a man! I wonder what thou wouldst make of him. He lives down south now. He helped me through my trouble: I had trouble there."

"I should call the place a jail, not a school," said I, disdainfully.

"Thou wouldst miscall it, then. 'Tis a school of the best."

And so we fell into friendly dispute as to the merits of Eton and Ackworth, I trying, as well as I might, to show him the rough, free, self-governed life of my great and ancient college, and he expounding to me the order, frugality and punctual restraints of the seminary to which he claimed to owe so much.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"Confess, now, George, were not the barbarisms of that un-shepherded rabble of yours a terrible ordeal for small and gentle lads? Were not some of these beaten down and crushed by the stronger wills and bodies?"

"Why, possibly," said I, considering the matter afresh; "It was no place for milk-sops, for such as could not hit back, and hit hard, I mean. And your old school, Abel, seems, from your account, to have been more like a monkish cloister, with its silence and narrow bounds, iron rule and hours for everything. A rare place for a quiet, gentle fellow, no doubt, but how about your dare-devils? You Quakers throw up such, occasionally, don't you?"

We were leaning upon the rail of the sluice-gate bridge on a mild morning, sunny and quiet. The sluices were all down and the brown tail-water lay still and clear below the mossy apron. A school of dace came flickering up — *Whish!* into their midst went a long furrow of white water; a pike had one of 'em: his brassy flank gleamed as he turned.

"Yes; the quietest waters have *that*," said Abel. "We have. Our oldest Quaker stocks do throw up wild adventurous shoots at times, and these . . . find Ackworth irksome. There was a boy there . . . I knew him; we were of an age, and had much in common. He could not bear it."

"I'll be bound he was a fine fellow!" I interjected.

"O, the finest!" cried he, with rare enthusiasm, "such a head! I was no match for him! Such a little fellow, too, but incredibly active, keen, hot —"

"A thoroughbred!"

"Thou hast it; ah, yes; and like some blood horses, he despised harness and would not endure the whip. Oh, an indomitable temper! The teachers there did their best; good men; they knew no other way. But they failed with him. It was rebellion and punishment, punishment and rebellion, until he

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

grew hardened and desperate. He got a master down and beat him badly, and being locked up to await a flogging, broke out and ran away."

His voice had fallen low and most mournful, but I remarked nothing at the time, crying: "Well done! I should like to meet that fellow! There is stuff in him. What became of the man?"

"Whether he joined the Gypsies first or went to sea, I am not sure. He tried both ways of life in turn, and saw, I believe, the most lawless side of each."

"Why, naturally enough, after such a cooping-in he would flutter his farthest. Ackworth would have driven me to poaching and smuggling, I am sure of it: can feel it tingling in my arms and legs.

And did he never come up again from his plunge? These wars should give such spirits their chance."

Abel had grown the gloomier as his story drew to a close, and had no reproving smile for my ebullition, but turned, his face from me. "Ah, there my tale ends," said he.

"Well, friend Abel, it takes all sorts to make a world. That sort goes campaigning; ye can't stop him; he is built that way. (So am I, worse luck! ")

I had near sighed out my secret, so changed my tune. "And you, what would you be if free to make your future?"

He did not reply at once; it was not his way. His gaze roved over the green country-side and saw (I doubt not) what neither I nor any other in those parts had then the wit to see — how vilely it was farmed. His eye took in its wastefully overgrown shaw-fences, its choked ditches and undrained rushy pastures. He must have seen its tumble-down post-and-pan cottages, filthy and ancient, each with its rotten thatch overhead, and its sodden earth floor underfoot, its midden before the door. These things stared you in the face all over England then, and no man gave them a thought.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"I would chuse to be steward to some rich man over a large estate, and have a free hand," said he.

"'Tis a fine life, I should suppose," said I, thinking aloud and like a fool; "there is all your time in the open and your fill of rod, and gun, and hound."

He had not heard me, and murmured softly on: "There are the farmers to protect from the landlords, and the poor ill-used land from the farmers; and the men from the masters, and the women and children from both . . . O, for schools, schools!"

"Education is poison to a labourer, Abel," said I, repeating the parrot-cry of the day. "A thick head, a strong arm, and a still tongue is all we want with 'em."

He blinked and shrugged slightly; he was used to let my banalities answer themselves.

"I would have a thatching class in my school," said he, "and prizes for hurdle-making, and for the best clipt sheep and the best ploughed acre, and for the best drest horse and the best kept harness — " he paused for breath, his eyes shining, and ran on again: "Oh, there are twenty other rural crafts; what do you say to prizes for trimmed quick and cut-and-laid fencing, for example?"

"Why, now I am with you," said I, "for all that you are for teaching 'em ties 'em to the land, makes better servants of 'em, and inclines them less to slip it off to town where these country handicrafts of yours are not wanted. Yes, friend Abel, when I come into my estate, I'll hand it over to ye to manage for me!" and with that I laughed out, hopelessly enough, and went on with my catechising.

"But all this, man, is for somebody else ('tis always so with you Quakers). What for *yourself*? Come now, three wishes, and I'll be your fairy godmother!"

"A better lathe; a better forge and — and — time to use both!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

"Aha! I know ye! 'Tis this imp's work, this steam-machine of yours you are thinking about."

"Hush, George!" he flushed like a girl surprised over a love-letter, "Not a word of this to anyone, *please*. I trust thee!"

Already the rare moment of self-revelation was passing. Like some strange foreign flower, I was once bid to see in someone's glass-house, which after months of preparation opened for its hour and then closed for ever, he was folding himself up, grimly and coldly, as a man ashamed of some untimely outburst of sentiment, and I was again (as ever) outside.

He shifted the parcel he was carrying. "Have thee heard of poor Demas's trouble? (for so I fear he will think it), a triplet! The man is somewhat upon my mind. He feels under a cloud and has the down look."

"Let him keep his hands out of the flour-bin then, and —"

"Yes, yes, I know, George; but still — I was on my way to pay the wife a little call. It seems an occasion for shewing them both that by-gones are by-gones: will thee come?"

The cottage stood by the stocks; Mrs. Demas, but a week from her lying-in, left the wash-tub to admit us. A thin, weary woman with a shifty eye and a deprecatory courtesy, she was as ill at ease in her landlord's presence as he in hers, tho' for better reasons, as I knew.

"Lawks, Master Abell!" cried she, drying her hands upon her apron, "An' soa ye've coom to see t' blessed childern!"

"Well, yes; if it is quite convenient," said he, slipping his parcel behind the door. The action and reply seemed a sensible relief to the woman, for, despite her expressed anticipation, it was plainly not what she had expected.

The little morsels, waxen and silent, lay upon a pillow happed in a blanket, side by side, showing piteously like to a child's dolls.

Abel bent over them with a depth of interest which sur-

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

prised me who knew of his passion for childhood. This glum, tongue-tied fellow could hardly endure the wailing of a child, and found infant laughter the sweetest of music. He would send many a half-hour upon his knees, toying with a baby, as his customers' wives knew well. "They are the most wonderful things, George, fresh from the Almighty's hand. Think of it!"

Thus he would say to me, who found them all alike, pink, squabby and void of interest.

"And, what will thee name them, dame?" said he.

"Faith, Hope, and Charity, sir, 'tis Demas's own thowt; ma 'oosband was iver a Bible man."

"Ah! and how will he know which is which?" (for they lay and were as like as peas in a pod).

"Asily, asily, sir," said the mother, stirring up the one which might be a shade the plumpest; " 'The greatest of these is Charity.' "

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE CHURCH TO THE RESCUE

THE living of Milton-on-Derwent is a vicarage which was then held by a non-resident incumbent, a Mr. Sinclair, who dwelt at his rectory of Monkholmeburn, some five miles away.

The man had recently read himself in, and we, who did not know him by sight, had heard of his discontent with the curate and annoyance at the neglected state of the church, which was grown more to the likeness of an ivy-tod than a place of prayer, the chancel roof being so over-flourished as to prove a stronghold for vermin, and being held a certain draw when fox-hounds came our way.

The late incumbent, also non-resident and very old, had let things go their own way. The new-comer was suspected of a zeal for renovation.

So much I learned from the talk of men in the mill. I may even have heard of a parish meeting to pass a rate, but cannot be sure. Neither my master nor Mr. Abel spoke of these things to me, and when they drove away early in May to attend the Quakers' yearly meetings at their central meeting-house in Gracechurch Street, London, if their leave-taking were more than commonly grave I knew not the reason.

It was the first warm day in a month parched by east winds

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

and a drying sun, and I, getting sacks of wheat from a wagon to the lewkom of the topmost floor, had leisure whilst the bright chain links ran through my fingers to look through the open shutter over the garden trees towards my master's house below.

It seemed that something unusual was afoot; I saw tables and chairs borne forth of the porch by strange hands, and there stood a knot of idlers before the door beside one or two conveyances. "Jeacocke," said I, to the foreman-miller whose sack-barrow was taking the wheat from my chain, "What is this at the house?" The man thrust his head forth, looked long, and having drawn it in, swore, which being no habit of his, and a thing out of the common in that mill, showed a disgust deeper than ordinary.

"D—n they thievin' churchwardens!" said he, "canna they lat t' women aloan when t'men's awäay? Yon's a seizure for the church räate, sir, and though I be as good a church and king's man as the passon himself, I be half a mind to —"

Now I knew that one of the peculiar views of the Quakers was (and is) to refuse payment of what they hold to be an unjust tax, and rather to permit their chattels to be distrained upon than to appear by paying to countenance what conscience disapproves.

And certainly to a plain man it seems hard to call upon those to repair a church who do not use it; and if by any chance the boot were upon t' other leg, and we Churchmen were bidden by a dissenting parliament to build Methodist chapels which we saw no need for, we should probably be sensible of injustice in what we now stoutly hold to be right and reasonable.

So much, I say, I knew; nor did I wait to discover what the half of the foreman's mind was inclined to; but, lifting the traps, slid down the chain hand over hand to the wagon below, leapt to the ground and ran to the house.

The scene that awaited me was sufficiently surprising

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

being more after the likeness of a house put to the sack by the French than what one expects in Old England.

There stood a broker and the bailiff from Monkholmeburn directing the removal of the furniture from the parlour. Tables, chairs, settle, family portraits, books and ornaments lay, upon the lawn in piteous disorder. Upon the hood over the porch stood Moses, his back arched, his tail like a bottle-brush. I could hear inside the house the gruff tones of strangers in controversy with my little mistress, whose voice was raised in entreaty and whom these seemed to be talking down.

Thrusting through the knot of idlers which these unusual proceedings had drawn to the spot, I reached the parlour, and found a room stript to the walls and floor, where the two Proctors, Isaac, the postmaster and vicar's churchwarden, and Elihu his brother, the parish constable, were plucking the last chair in the room from under my mistress, regardless of her gentle remonstrance and her daughter's plea that her mother was unable to rise.

The poor lady would certainly have fallen heavily had not Miss Phoebe interposed her arm and broken her mother's descent to the floor.

When I saw this, the strength of strong passion coming upon me, I had much ado to restrain my fists; indeed, but for the gentle presences in which I stood, and the schooling I had undergone at their hands, I had certainly done those rude fellows a mischief.

What I did was to throw my arms around the churchwarden from behind and carry him from the house; it was a weighty burden, but not so heavy as a sack of flour which scales two hundred and eighty-five pounds and is of ten carried in such fashion by a good man. So amazed was the fellow, he being in ignorance of my coming, or in whose grip he found himself, that he made no resistance, and when I tossed him down somewhat

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

roughly, as I own, he fell, being breathless. And with that his brother the constable rushing upon me in anger from behind, but forgetting a certain break of level and half-step, missed his footing and me, and sprawled his length upon him he desired to help without touch of mine.

Thus rolling one upon another they lay at the foot of the porch steps in no contrite humour.

"In t' King's nāame!" panted the constable rising and pointing me to the crowd, but keeping himself beyond my reach.

"Thou shalt smeat fur this, Quäaker! dom thee!" growled the postmaster brushing his knees.

"And what may this mean, good people? Ah! Proctor, 'tis you, is it? And now, as soon as you have your breath, be good enough to tell me what you are about."

The speaker was a person of fifty or thereabouts, attired in a long black riding-coat and small tricorne with white wig and neckcloth. The intonation and choice of words denoted his station; his seat, for he addressed us from the saddle, and all the assured carriage and pose of the man spoke of race.

Whilst awaiting his answer he ran his eye over the disarray of furniture, the carts in attendance, the broker's men in aprons preparing to load, and was visibly displeased with what he saw.

"Sarvice to ye, rector; 'tis the church räate, sir. These be Quäakers as won't päay," said the elder Proctor.

"Oho! and you are distraining upon Mr. Ellwood's chat-tels?" returned the rector (for this was he) very gently, but with a certain iciness in his manner.

"Why, yes, rector, they niver päays, an' soo we seizes. 'Tis the law, yer worship; an' we calls on ye to witness this yong man's vi'lence. We've bin strook and floong out o' t'house, an' obstroocted in the execution of our duties."

"Not quite so fast, Mr. Proctor; you are my churchwarden

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

certainly, but your office does not empower you to seize personally."

"Nor to offer violence to ladies, sir," said I.

His eye turned to me and flashed a question. I answered it.

"These fellows have not only stript a room, sir, but have thrown my mistress from her chair to the floor, an invalid, unable to rise. 'Twas for that I outed them, tho' I have struck no blows — yet."

"We waanted t'chair: she wouldna get oot on't," growled the men.

"Hold my mare!" The rector swung down lightly and passed into the house uncovered. I followed him. My mistress, very pale and faint, lay where she had fallen, the chair overturned beside her; Miss Phoebe supporting her mother's head upon her knees. The spectacle would have moved a Turk.

The rector paused upon the threshold and for a moment found not a word to say. "Madam," he exclaimed at length, and his voice vibrated strangely, and as he spoke he made the ladies the finest bow in the world and displayed the most embarrassed face. "Madam . . . what can I say? . . . How shall I express my indignation and regret? . . . I rode hither to-day in hopes . . . but I must first present myself to you as the vicar of Milton. It is my misfortune ladies, to enter your dwelling . . . to make my first appearance in the guise of a thief! . . . I had intended otherwise. . . . I am forestalled. Will you bear . . . may I venture to offer my assistance?"

I stepped forward; together we replaced my mistress in her seat. She smiled breathlessly, but with the sweetest intention.

The rector stood before her flushed with emotion, his fine eyes sparkling; and now that I had a better look at him I decided that I liked his face, which was a strong face, and

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

a good face, and belonged to a man that I had rather agree with than differ from.

My mistress had by this regained her voice. "Friend Sinclair, I thank thee kindly," said she and offered him her hand, which he took and lifted to his lips, dropping upon one knee the while, with as courtly a motion as though the small white faded fingers had been those of his sovereign. Rising he swept her another inclination and left the room.

Next minute his voice rang from without, intense, imperative as the voice of a drill sergeant. "Replace this furniture — every stick of it — d'ye hear? And handle it as if 'twere china. In with you!" His tones shook with anger, which he held in, and curbing himself to silence, stood upon guard until the last piece was replaced and the door closed.

"And now," said he, taking the oaken garden-seat beside the porch, "I am upon the bench; I sit here as magistrate and propose to enquire what this business may mean." His eye travelled around the circle of blank or sullen faces. A vicar and rector who was likewise a justice, and was known to have been called to the bar before taking orders, was not a man to trifle with, right or wrong.

"Here's a piece of work, indeed," he went on, "that bristles with illegalities, as the veriest fool may see! Mr. Broker, your license! — Out with it fellow, don't tell me that ye have it not upon you! — Ah! past date by a month, sirrah! — You are fined the full amount, ten pounds, and I warn ye I shall make it my business to oppose its renewal. This alone puts us all out of court. But had ye nought else? This is not enough; where is your warrant?"

The broker looked upon the churchwarden, and he upon the broker, and at length after searching of pockets produced a demand note! The rector let himself go. "Dolts! knaves! nincompoops! What have you done? D'ye not see that this is

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

sheer house-breaking ? God in Heaven !” he shouted. “ Am I, in the first month of my incumbency to be asked to hold a candle to sordid felons ? What ? ‘ You didn’t know ? ’ ‘ You didn’t think ? ’ ‘ Twas all for the Church ! ’ And so *I* am to screen you and pocket the proceeds of a larceny from the meekest and kindest of my people ? Blockheads ! ” he blurted, driving his spurs into the gravel, “ This might lay every man jack of you by the heels in York Castle, if not in the hulks ; Hear ye that ? ”

They heard and trembled, for Mr. Sinclair’s eye and voice carried conviction.

“ And as for you, Master Constable, what do *you* here upon private property ? Have you a search-warrant ? No ! Nor a warrant to arrest ? No ! Well, if you remain a constable at the week’s end ’twill not be by fault of mine. But, heh ! stop there ! ” for Elihu was slipping off. “ Not so fast ; you came, it would seem, for your own pleasure, you shall now serve mine, and while ye yet bear the truncheon shall do *my* bidding. Take these two into your custody ! ”

The postmaster and broker changed countenances, their chops fell, their knees quaked under them.

“ To the stocks with them, Master Constable, quickly ! What man, ye hesitate ? you refuse ? Hark ! I call upon all loyal people to support me who am set here as justice of the king’s peace ; and by God ! if there be three pair of holes, Master Constable, you shall sit beside them ! ”

By this every man who could leave the mill, and some half-dozen of wagoners, stood around him, and these were hot-faced and eager to do his bidding. The three culprits resisted no further, but with hanging heads and haggard faces were thrust along down street in the midst of a jeering crowd, the rector striding behind, riding-whip in hand.

Whilst I hung irresolute, boy-like, desiring to see justice done upon these insolent persons, but still anxious about my

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

mistress, Miss Phoebe beckoned me from the porch, and I followed her within. Said her mother:

"George, what has happened; what will he do to those poor men?"

"Clap them in the stocks, ma'am, and, if I may say so, 'tis too light and easy a punishment for such deserving ruffians."

"Hush! thou means well, but thou knows not of what spirit thou art. Get me a man; such another as thyself. I must follow friend Sinclair."

"Oh, Mother! thou canst not put foot to ground!" cried my little mistress.

"Nay, I must go, if George carries me in his hands, but with two I could go in this chair. Away with thee, George!"

I sped to the mill, which seemed mighty empty of journeymen. Demas, the spoutsman, was sitting upon a sack; he rose as I entered.

"Where is Jeacocke?" I asked.

"There! Gearge, 'tis not for the likes o' me to säay. Mebbe e' awäay down street — on his own business. Mebbe 'e's aloft. I'll not defäame a fellow journeyman's karicter. No, Gearge! If some 'as bin and took time 'as 'ad no rights so for to do, whaat's the odds to me? I'm mutual. Whiles the mill runs I sticks to my spouts, gently — muddlin' along."

"Confound your long tongue, Demas, where is the foreman?"

"Thäat's the question. I'm neither church nor dissent; Demas 'll be nayther partial nor impartial, sez I —"

"He! he!" cackled the senile falsetto of old Widdas from his heap of broken empties. "I 'members my feyther tellin' when first they Quäakers coom to Milton. They draawed 'em through the watter, they did; thro' t' mill-täail; he seen 'em. He! he!"

But the changed note of the mill, the dying cadence of stopping wheels caught my ear; through a window I saw the

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

tail-water settling. Demas caught the sound too, and leapt to his levers to lift the runners off his bed-stones. "I'm mutual," he squeaked, "neither partial — " but I waited to hear no more as I ran to the wheel-house. Truth to say, the man was a trimmer, upon the swing between church and chapel, as he descried his advantage, and had been converted and lapsed and again reclaimed time and again. Just now he was in slack water, secretly bitter against masters who had detected his pilferings and — forgiven them.

The sunshine poured through the open door of the wheel-house upon the dripping floats of the great under-shot slowing to a stand. Jeacocke, crowbar in hand, had lowered the shutter and stopt the mill. He turned upon me darkly. "And where's the rest?" He set down the crow and threw out empty hands. "How is my master's mill to be kept running if every man an' läad goes forth to a hubbleshow? I've shet down, and they shall hear for why!"

"Leave all, come with me; 'tis the mistress calls for you," I said.

Bearing the chair easily between us we came unnoticed to the crowd about the stocks. The three sat in the bilboes, their wrists and ankles fast, for the thing was not of our south-country pattern, and served for pillory as well. The faces of the brothers Proctor wore lively expressions of anger and fear. Long had they lorded it over the village, making themselves as offensive as they dared to my masters, and soundly detested by all. The tidings of their fall had flown abroad with incredible swiftness, near every soul in the place seemed afoot, gaffers and gammers hobbling up to gnash toothless gums at the tyrant who stunted the church doles, whilst the boys who hated the constable for his severities to them as beadle, were gathering garbage for his benefit.

Bill Telfer, the village sot, who had sat in the stocks himself

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

last month for his sins, was there with a pailful of drowned pups, and seemed to be making good practice. As we broke into the ring the last of the litter took the constable full across the mouth and dropt into his lap.

"Make way, good folks!" bawled Jeacocke, and way was made, all agreeing that Madam Ellwood had as good a right as any to the show.

"To friend Sinclair!" she said, and we had set her chair beside him before he knew of our presence. Seldom surely has a man been more surprised; whipping off his hat he made her an obeisance fit for a duchess, and seeing her lips move inaudibly where all were talking, laughing, hooting and jeering, he raised hand and voice and called for silence.

"Madam," said he, "you do us too much honour; may I ask your pleasure?"

"Friend Sinclair," said she, "if these poor men are punished upon my account, I beg thee to set them at liberty; for myself I freely forgive them — freely!"

Her spirit had carried her thus far, now it failed. With outstretched hands still trembling from her fall, and with tears trickling down her pale face, she bent forward silenced by her weakness. The vicar was visibly moved.

"Madam, I could refuse you nothing if your charity did not compel my consent! . . . 'Fore God, 'tis a wonder! . . . Hear to this lady, ye rascals! She has made herself be carried here for your sakes. She begs you off! Instead of bidding me send you to jail, she sets you free. You broke her house, you flung her from her chair, you stole her goods, and what does she? *She forgives you!* . . . Let them out."

He turned, and making a lane for us through the press, walked beside us to the house, hat in hand, a wonder to his parish. At the door he bowed once more, and was for taking his leave, but my mistress, now herself again, constrained him in to rest

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

himself and to eat, for dinner was being served. He accepted with the best grace.

I had baited his horse, washed myself at the pump, and was making for my lodging when waylaid by my little mistress. "Mother desires thee to join us, George." "That is most kind of mother, but what will her guest say?" She laughed merrily and helped me beat the worst of the dust from my clothes with a clean besom.

"Ah! this is the young Samson!" said the great man, quizzing me as I entered; yet having looked me over without disapproval he offered me his hand, which surprised me.

"As I was saying, Mrs. Ellwood, here am I but half-warm in my seat, and what with my four livings, have my hands full. How this rate would affect you had escaped me at the meeting, and I rode here this day to make the matter right. Of a levy I never dreamed; the thing should have been impossible. The demand-notes were but just issued, and no warrant so much as applied for. The lawlessness of our people where you Friends are concerned is astounding! The rapacity of those fellows! They had seized — what — ?" he glanced around the room — "At a guess now, a hundred pounds'-worth of goods to satisfy a ten-pound demand! Ah! I know them — not a shilling would they have returned you. At a forced sale by an interested auctioneer to a ring of his cronies, your handsome things would have barely satisfied the rate and costs! Never, whilst I hold the living, shall you be troubled again."

My mistress thanked him and catching my eye bent her head in the silent grace-before-meat of the Friends, and then bade me carve.

"If all my brother parsons had enjoyed the same experience as I, madam, 'tis little ill-usage you Friends would suffer at their hands. Yes, this is not the first — nor the fiftieth — meal I have eaten at a Friend's table!"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

We looked the surprise we felt, for social intercourse between men of his cloth and the Friends was unknown, and he was the first that I had heard speak of the society civilly, or by any other designation than its nickname.

"Yes," he resumed, "but before I tell you my story I have an apology to offer. I perceive by the plan of this house that my *al fresco* court of justice was held within your hearing, madam. If any heated or profane expression of mine wounded your ears, or the ears of this young lady, I ask your pardons, and the pardon of Almighty God, for indeed I came somewhat late in life to my holy office, and a bad old trick of swearing still clings to my tongue. God forgive me!

"But, for my respect for your sect, ma'am; 'twas like this. I was bred to the bar, ate my dinners and rode the Northern circuit. The e were wildish doings and much drinking of needless toasts at mess, and as young blood when inflamed with good wine is hot, ma'am, there were quarrels, and men were called out.

"'Twas at York Assizes, two-and-twenty years ago last Michaelmas, that, to my shame, I fell out with an industrious, painstaking young counsel, whose poverty earned my contempt, whose growing success touched my spleen, for I was well-to-do, idle, and seldom briefed. And so, and so, my young lady (for I see by your eyes ye like news of the wicked world ye will never see!) I put an affront upon this gentlemen and was called upon to give satisfaction.

"We met in a little plashy meadow at the back of a fine tall house in the hamlet of Holgate, outside the Walls, not one of our mess being native to those parts or knowing the district; and there at our first discharge were both down, hard hit. I remember very little more, but have been told that the whole affair was so irregular and ill-guided that the law was like to have taken strict account of it; and so our seconds

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

thought, for upon the surgeon declaring us to be as good as dead men, they lost their heads and ran, and the rascally saw-bones followed to get his fee; and we, lying there in our blood, came near to making the fellow's prognosis good, but were succoured by a Quaker — I beg your pardon, ma'am, a Friend — ah! and he was a Friend!

"'Twas upon this gentleman's ground we were trespassing (shooting without license, my young lady)! He comes up at the sound of shots, finds a worthy young fellow and a worthless scapegrace busily bleeding to death, makes tourniquets of his neck-cloth, halloas for his groom and gardeners, has us carried to his house, and, in a word, nurses us back to life."

"To a better life, I trust," said my mistress.

"Amen! ma'am! to a better and eventually to an eternal life through Christ's merits." He bent his head in silence whilst a man might count five. "We lay in one room for weeks, having the best care and skill that money and an excellent heart could supply. I, tho' shot high up in the thigh, made the better recovery. My poor friend — for we have been friends from that hour — suffered torments with his knee, and I, lying and seeing his misery, suffered too, as was right and but after my desert."

"And I trust under Providence, my friend, that the discipline was blest to you both," said my mistress.

"I trust so, ma'am, but can speak the better for myself. Those two months made another man of me; not all at once, indeed, but I had received somewhat into my system beside the ball, something that left a distaste to what I had relished, and a relish for what I had despised, and at length drew me from the bar to the church. And here you have me as your vicar, and, if I may make my heart's intentions plain at a first introduction, your good friend, if you will permit me, for what I owe to your society is more than I can repay."

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

The lady's look was sufficient assent.

"And the poor young counsel?" asked Miss Phoebe.

"Ah, 'twas a sad set-back for him in his profession, and fell at a time when he could ill afford it, for his family had been brought to poverty by the practice of some wealthier relations. But, such was his heart, my dear young lady, and such were his parts, that there was no keeping him from the front, and he was soon known as the best stuff gown on the circuit, and might have taken silk two or three years before he did, had he thought it prudent to drop so much practice as the change might entail. Oh, he is knighted years since, and upon the bench and a great man. You will have heard of Sir Algernon Maskelyne-Fanshawe."

Yes, the ladies had heard of that eminent person. Had he not rid the northern circuit the previous autumn? His masterly charge to the grand jury at the York Assizes was still in all mouths, it had even reached the ears of Miss Phoebe. I experienced a twinge of fool's jealousy: here again, as at Ouseby, the only Fanshawe known was the junior branch. My father, the head of his race, with his public services, name and titles, was overshadowed and belittled by the genius of this new man, a mere puisne judge with a fire-new knighthood.

Aye, but what a man! The cold, clear-cut face of this distant kinsman came up before me as I sate; I had seen it but twice, once beside the road at Huntingdon as he rode to his courthouse behind his javelin-men, and again, more recently, in a glare of linklights and a wetness of fog upon that memorable night in York City.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE LIFTING OF THE CLOUD

A SPELL of quiet weather followed this storm, during which, with failing water and a low stock of wheat, we ran the mill upon half-time and awaited our masters' return.

During these quiet days the cloud settled down closely upon my spirit, and once more I was persuaded that the Divine pity was not for me, and this time the precise cause of my reprobation seemed evident.

You may know that there are certain Scriptures which refer to "*a sin which is unto death*," for which prayer itself, it is to be supposed, is unavailing; also a sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is neither forgiveness in this world nor in that which is to come.

These appalling texts, about which theologians have disputed of old, and will dispute, I suppose, until interrupted by the crack of doom, have exercised a baleful influence upon humanity; for whereas no blasphemous rake, that ever I heard tell of, has given them a thought, they have preyed like cancers upon the imaginations of some of the holiest and most innocent of mankind, of which the fate of that scholarly saint and ingenious poet, Mr. William Cowper, is an instance.

My life, though neither holy nor innocent, had been cer-

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

tainly no worse than that of my fellows, save in one particular. When a lower boy at Eton I had been led aside by an evil youngster and made to repeat after him some abracadabra of wickedness which, when I had done, the imp assured me was a curse against the Holy Ghost which could never be forgiven. This childish naughtiness, which troubled me but little at the time, and had lain for years clean forgotten, now cast up against me like a nine-days drowned corpse and stared me down.

If ever any repented I did. Neither tears nor prayers did I spare when the fit was upon me. But to confess seemed impossible, and to what purpose? No counsellor could arrest the wheels of judgment; my sentence stood. To own my guilt would have led (as I thought) to my being driven from among men, a lost soul, self-condemned, branded as with the sign of Cain. Nor could I endure to think upon the distress this disclosure would cause to my little mistress and her family. For her sake and theirs I determined to keep a calm face toward the world to my last breath.

So I bore my misery as best I might, but not unmarked by my gentle master. Once and again Mr. Ellwood looked upon me, giving me the chance of opening my mind to him, and when I withheld my confidence, ceased not his kindness nor changed his manner to me at all.

Once upon a day when my countenance must have shown my inward wretchedness, he called me to him in the garden and showed me his watch, " 'Tis an old friend, George, and has long been faithful, but is ailing from some little jar or intrusion (and the dust of our trade is hard upon a watch, as thou knows). Now what wouldst thou advise?"

"Indeed, I have no skill in watches," said I, "but there is a clock-maker in Beverley whom Abel speaks well of —"

"But I shall not be in Beverley again this month, which entails waiting. Thou wouldst not entrust it to our millwright?"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

"Why, no!" I laughed, "Jowett is a good man in his own line, I think, but such small work is beyond him."

"Nor our Milton smith, George?"

Then I laughed no more, for by his eye and voice I saw this was a parable.

"When it is a delicate matter, and an inward matter, and the trouble is deep-seated, it is wise to wait for the right hand, eh, George? Even though that hand may not be forthcoming to-day, nor to-morrow, nor for many days, eh, George?"

I nodded: my heart being full; but this conversation sensibly lifted the weight of my loneliness, for now I knew that my sadness was not a matter indifferent to my friends.

That neither was it indifferent to a higher power I had the best of evidence at this time but not the wit to read it. Thus one day, whilst looping the running-noose of chain around the neck of a sack, my thumb was caught, and the hoisting-tackle running at great speed, I was unable to release myself and was drawn up swiftly to the top of the building through four sets of trap-doors, and there, by God's mercy, found alive, nor was my thumb the worse for its ill-usage.

When I considered that the traps were made no bigger than conveniently to permit the passage of a sack, and that I, clinging to this sack, had passed four in almost as many seconds without breaking my skull or tearing away my thumb, I was for the moment impressed with a sense of Divine protection, but, block that I was, presently lost it again.

Now at that time there was a custom among the Quakers for some of their preachers, both men and women, to pay what were called "religious visits." Thus, a minister residing (let us say) at Cirencester would "feel it upon his heart" to visit Friends in Northumberland, not only to preach in their meeting-houses, but also to stop a night here, and to pay a call

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

there, in the homes of the Friends of that neighbourhood for prayer and edification.

This simple missionary method was justified by results, the traveller being the guest of different pious householders in turn, and sharing in the family life of those to whom he had felt drawn to minister.

Under these circumstances his ministry (preaching) would often be extremely penetrating and effectual; most of these itinerant missionaries (both men and women) being persons of experience and insight, and combining wisdom with simplicity.

In this connection I could relate curious incidents of spiritual discernment of things kept secret, and the alleviation of hidden needs almost surpassing belief, yet as well attested as the most ordinary fact, but will confine myself to the personal experience which follows.

It seems that a certain Friend travelling with a letter of introduction, or, as Friends would say "*with a minute*," from some meeting near Hitchin, was to pay his visit to the Ellwood household upon a certain day in June, all of which, if I had been told, I had forgotten, and was at work in the mill when I thought I heard my master's voice call me without, and, leaving my sack upon the hooks (for I was emptying the troughs) crossed the yard and ran up the garden, dusty as I was, striking the meal from my bare arms, and, as afterwards appeared, missing a messenger from the house who was seeking me in the office. Seeing no one, I approached the porch, and thence a voice, not my master's, reached my ear, speaking from the parlour. Entering the hall I found the whole family gathered as at a meeting or service, and, being still under the impression that I was wanted, drew near to the open door, going tiptoe, with head bent and silently in my list slippers. Now a folding-screen stood inside the door of that room and a stool behind it, to which Abel, who sat just within, motioned me, and presently

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

the voice of the speaker was hushed. That my coming was seen by him was impossible, nor do I consider it in any degree likely that he heard me enter.

I had so far gathered nothing of his address, nor knew his name or person. During the silence which now fell upon the assembly my cloud darkened upon me, and I was bowed together as by an unendurable burden of apprehension of the judgment to come. As I sat thus, the sweat starting upon me and my hands clenched as if by a convulsion, and I too cast down and hopeless even to put up my usual prayer, "*Enter not into judgment with Thy servant!*" the preacher rose and broke the deep and terrible silence with these words: "*Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thought, and let him turn unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God and He will abundantly pardon.*"

What more he would have said, or whether this was the extent of his message I know not, for something cracked within me and my burden fell; light broke in, and my cloud parted. I sprang to my full height and, being tall, saw over the top of the screen the face of the Quaker who had counselled me upon the coach at Huntingdon. Our eyes met and he read in mine the fulfillment of his concern for that household. No word was said by him or any other; for all that appeared in my master's face, this might have been by his arrangement and the most natural thing in the world. The preacher rose and, moving around the screen, took me in silence by the hand and led me forth to the garden.

I have been told that at his first rising he was sensible that all the household was not present, and further that the one who was absent was he to whom he was sent, and that presently he felt his lips opened and that when my face appeared above the screen he knew within himself that his work there was accomplished.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

AN ADVENTURE AND NEWS

WHETHER the new penny post is destined to be all that public advantage which the pertinacious and persuasive Mr. Hill protests, my young relatives may live to see, and I shall refrain from prophesying.

It is certainly already a considerable private convenience to persons of small incomes, but until the common people have been taught to read and write can hardly be much gain to the poor.

In the year 1799 the writing of a letter was still an accomplishment and the getting it posted something of an event. Letters between the North of England and the South were few because expensive, and, being so costly, those franked by members of either House of Parliament were closely scrutinised. The forgery of a frank was the commonest of frauds because the easiest to effect and the most difficult to trace.

My young mistress, to whom alone I had confided my family, was impatient to see the despatch of our joint handiwork, and must accompany me to the postmaster's office, a public institution rare in country places, and which Milton-on-Derwent owed to I know not what, for the business it did was of the lightest.

I have said that the postmaster was vicar's churchwarden.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Since his rebuff in the matter of the distraint the man had borne me no love. When we entered his den he was spelling through a month-old gazette to his brother the constable, who, seeing me, regarded us sourly, and lent his ear again to the reader. The half-sheet with the foreign intelligence lay upon the counter. I remember that it told of Massena's retreat before the Austrians and the battle of Zurich, matters too far afield for these clodpoles who were engrossed in doings nearer home.

"Wha-at?" growled the constable, "They've robbed t' mail again?"

"Aye, läad, nigh-hand to Doncaster this time. And 'tis Sam Smith, as usual. Heark to this, now, '*One boonderd guineas reward.*' Eh, but a would laike fine to tooch t'brass!" he stumpled through the printed description of the thief and resumed his comment: "Mooch t'säame as before, tha hears; Quäaker hat and coat and all; a wee, fond-luiking, thin-fäaced, shotten herring of a feller a mun be to luik at. Wheer has we seen sooch? eh, Eli?" the postmaster gloomed askance at his brother, whose vacant, beery visage expressed small intelligence, stubbly chin, blubber lip and piggy eye leering at my little mistress. The reader keeping a dirty finger upon the line followed the glance; some gleam of malicious understanding passed between the pair.

Since neither stirred to attend to our business I civilly interposed by asking the elder Proctor to take charge of the letter, which he did, weighing it in hand and examining it before a candle for enclosures. "'Twill be seven-and-six at t'other end," quoth he. "Not so," said I, "d'ye not see the frank?" He grunted, replaced his spectacles, and again held the letter to the light, and indeed the cover had grown soiled and creased in its travels, and my father's signature was small and fine.

"Blakenham, that's B," said he, and reached himself down a reference-book of autographs issued to postmasters. His

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

brother leaned upon his shoulder, they whispered, and the constable turning laid a heavy hand upon my collar,

“Yoong shäaver, I ’rest ye for forgery i’ the king’s näame!”

I caught my breath; the absurdity of the thing tickled me to laughter.

“Tha grins, doost tha? Aha! thou’lt grin thro’ a halter in York Castle, ma läad!”

At these words my little mistress put up a low wail, “Oh, George, let me fetch father!”

“Noa! — stop wheer tha stands! Tak t’ wench too, Eli, she’s art and part, I charge both!”

The constable gript the child as she fled to the door, but this was beyond my bearing. I caught both his wrists and held him helpless until Phoebe was well upon her way. When a few minutes later her father and brother entered they found me ironed.

The postmaster conscious of playing a great part with a yet greater in prospect, magnified his office.

“ ’Tis no sort o’ use your comin’ ’ere, Mr Ellwood; we’ve got ’im at last; and now ’e’ll ’ave to be disposed of as t’law directs. ’Tis forgery, and there’s an end on’t.”

“O, ye can speak to him — in my presence. Mebbe ye’d like to be writin’ ’is last dyin’ speech and confession — there’s a pen, there. . . . No; we’ll not remove the irons; ’twas a vi’lent resistance he offered, and a desprut villain he is. Ye’ve mooch to answer for, in my opinion, for bringin’ sooch into t’parish and harbourin’ ’m.”

“George, what is this?”

“They’ve arrested me for using a frank, sir, given me by my father.”

“How did thy father obtain it?”

“He sat down and wrote it, sir; he is the Earl of Blakenham.”

The effect of this announcement upon my employers was

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

scarcely noticeable. I stood confest the son of an earl; they regarded me with strong, kindly interest, but no more personal, kindly and strong than if I had owned to being the son of a convict.

With the Proctors my words worked otherwise. For a moment they gaped upon me with awed faces, the innate slavishness of the lower class of Englishmen palsied them; had they indeed bungled the affair? Then the essential baseness of common natures appeared; shifty and untrue themselves, they saw shifts and untruths in everyone. The postmaster guffawed:

"Sounds loikely, Eli; see 'is 'ands!" My fingers were certainly unlike those of a gentleman of fashion.

"T' brass is as mooch mine as if I 'ad it 'ere!" he cried, slapping his breeches pocket, and I knew he alluded to the blood-money paid to informers upon conviction.

"There is a mistake somewhere, my friend," said Mr. Ellwood; "thou canst not grant bail, nor can I be sworn his bailsmen, yet I am so convinced of this young man's innocence that I will place a hundred pounds in thy hands as security for his appearance if thou wilt leave thy prisoner in mine."

But to this my captors demurred, refusing even to remove my irons. Upon my way to the village lock-up I was upheld by the company of Mr. Ellwood, and before the door closed upon me saw Abel start to fetch the parson.

I had not grown reconciled to the irksome weight and constraint of the manacles when the key groaned in the lock, and I was had out to the open air and down street to the post-office. My young master's gig was beside the road with a lathered beast between the shafts; three tall saddle-horses stood in the shade of the church limes in charge of a liveried man whose back seemed familiar to me.

The small, dingy room was overfull for so warm a day. Mr. Sinclair and his brother magistrate, a fine red-faced

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

young man, still under thirty, were seated; the rest of us stood: half the village gaped in the street without; the Ellwoods were alone admitted and the door shut.

Mr. Sinclair nodded to me and I returned his courtesy. "Take off those things, Master Constable," said he.

"Sir, he offered vi'lent resistance," objected Elihu.

"To his own arrest, or to your rudeness to a lady? Off with them, sirrah! 'Twill be time enough to chain him when we have committed him. What is the charge, Mr. Postmaster?"

Both gentlemen listened with concentrated attention; the younger spoke,

"And now, Mr. Fanshawe, if that be your name, tell us the history of this frank of yours."

I told it but lamely, I doubt, being nervously anxious to tell the exact truth. He nursed the postmaster's book upon his knee and passed it to his companion. "Not the faintest resemblance; 'tis not a case of a good quill or a bad, of glazed paper or cartridge," said he in chagrin.

"May I see that book, sir?" said I.

He placed it in my hands, ignoring the hasty and half-checked intervention of the postmaster.

"But, this is not my father's hand!" I cried.

"'Tis Lord Blakenham's, anyway, sir."

"Not a bit of it; 'tis Bramford's, my brother's."

"*Bramford?* who is Bramford?" asked Mr. Sinclair.

"Courtesy title," said his friend; then to me, suddenly, "Who was your dame?"

"Mrs. Stokes," said I.

"What house?" said he.

"Glassdale's," I replied as promptly.

"Good; I fagged Bramford; do you remember me?"

"N—No, but you must be 'Old Mandy;' I forget your proper name, but I remember your licking Bramford for nailing all my

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

sock the first day I came up. You left at the end of my first half-term, didn't you?"

"I dare say I did, but I've clean forgotten you. I think he's all right, Sinclair. Wait a bit, though. You say you are a Fanshawe; what's your blazon?"

"Barry of eight, erminois and gules, is our coat," said I, but my father bears the Bluebottles in pretence, for my mother is heiress of the Chorleys, ye know."

"I don't; but I dare say you are right. You are a gentleman, anyhow. Now, how the devil did you get hold of this amazing frank of my old fag's?"

"Sir! you never fagged my father! He wrote it; I saw him write it. Do you think I should address a letter to my mother, to Lady Blakenham, with a forgery of my lord's name on the cover?"

He gazed upon me with an air of friendly puzzlement, and "Fellow!" says he to the constable, a stout man, and full of beer, "your leathers stink damnably; 'twould turn the stomach of a polecat! Open that door, man, and stand outside!"

"Hulloa!" he cried, as a better light fell upon me from without, "Why, as I live, 'tis the man that saved my master stag! Forger be d — d!" says he, "I'd not believe it of him, tho' I saw him do it! See here, Sinclair, this is an old Eton man; he can get a spent horse over the pewyest line in the riding, and whip hounds off a stag that is cast better than I could myself, and — heaven forgive me! — I know no higher praise! What! hang this man for forging a pitiful frank? I'll write him as many as he will. Give me a pen, sirrah!"

"Now, for heaven's sake, my dear Mandeville, leave this to me!" laughed the parson, hugely diverted. "I am as hard to convince of this young gentleman's guilt as yourself, and make as little doubt but that he can explain everything; na'theless, explain it he must, for we are set here as justices,

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

and must hold an even scale; yes, to old schoolmates and good men over a country."

"Why, of course, that is right enough!" growled Lord Mandeville (for this was he), forcing his fists deep into his breeches pockets.

"And now, Mr. Fanshawe," the parson turned to me with a mingling of kindness and firmness, "We have reached to this; we find you passing a frank which is certainly none of Lord Blakenham's; yet you persist you had it from the earl, and that he is your brother —"

"My father, sir!"

"Are there two peerages in the family? A moment," he turned to his colleague, "D'ye know when the present earl succeeded?"

"A twelvemonth or more," said he.

"Sir," said the parson, "since when have you left your home? or had news of your people? Is it possible that you are unapprised of the death of your father?"

I stood as one bewildered; the possibility of such a calamity having never entered my head, fool that I was.

My Lord Mandeville, looking fixedly upon me to see how I took the news, grunted, called for a pen and scrawled his frank across my letter.

"Let that go, Master Postman, by the next mail. Her ladyship will be pleased to hear from you, sir. Constable, you there! case dismissed; and hark ye, sirrah! handle the next gentleman ye come across differently. . . . And, see here, Mr. Fanshawe, whether ye wait for your answer or would set off at once, I should esteem it an honour to — in short, sir, look upon me as your banker."

He gript my hand, an action which clinched the half-driven conviction of the slow-witted fellows, place-men both. We passed the door together and stood, I silent and full of whirling

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

thoughts, regrets, wonderments; he prattling of Eton and old names and between-while bawling for his horse. The groom led it up, parting the crowd, but in place of holding bit and off stirrup in customary style, stood gaping and grinning upon *me*, clicking his heels together and saluting, too, in soldierly wise! It was Hymus, my faithful Hymus, in the Mandeville livery, smug, rosy, and in good liking, bright of eye and brimming with the civil self-respect which follows appreciated service, a different object from the cowed, half-starved king's trooper that I had known.

"Hay, Hymus; and what d'ye know of this gentleman? speak up, man! Sinclair, I say! d'ye see my man here is prepared with testimony to character? Ha! ha!"

"Why, yes, m'lord, ye may say all that and more. This here gene'lman be Mr. George Fanshawe, Cap'n Fanshawe, my old cap'n, m'lord, and the best friend and kindest master as ever a poor soul had."

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

ON MY HOME-COMING

I STOOD in the porch of Bramford Church one afternoon in June, having left my horse at the *Angel* to bait. I had ridden past the park gates, for my lady would be at her dower-house at Sproughton, two miles beyond, and with Blakenham in town there was nought at the Hall to detain me from her; nor anything in our village that I cared to see that day, save my father's tomb, to which filial respect demanded a visit.

My mother would not approve my neglecting it, even to press on to herself.

By the chances of the road I had met not a soul whom I knew, though to be sure, at a bridle-path's end between Needham and Claydon I had seen the back of a lady riding quickly, and, despite the thick white dust, had felt sure that I had just missed encountering the Marquise de la Rochemesnil. At another time my heart had beaten at the thought of meeting Lucille, and my old friend would have been pleased enough to have seen me, a holloa would have stayed her, but my first greeting was due to my mother.

I had followed the mill lane at the back of the hamlet, had listened to the rumble of the stones from within the dusty door with instructed ears. All seemed small, but otherwise my

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

unaltered. I experienced an unreasonable surprise that months of absence had wrought so few amendments. But it was I that had changed.

The hay being about, and all the place in the hay, I had not happened upon a soul, and lifting the church latch, uncovered and entered the cool, hollow old place very much at my ease.

It was strange to think of him lying there, but, force my feeling how I would, and chasten my impiety as soundly as it deserved, the fact remained that I was made thoughtful, speculative perhaps, but hardly saddened by my loss [and now at the close of a long life, during which, as I trust, I have displayed some heart and right feeling, I can still find excuses for my insensibility. 1858].

My father had taken little pleasure in my infancy. Bramford, as heir to the title, had engrossed his solicitude, and in him his hopes had centred.

My lord was of Mr. Pitt's following, a Parliament man, full and busy, with ambitions for himself and his race. He lived a life for the most part away from his estates, which left him small leisure to cultivate the acquaintance of a dull gawk of a country lad with whom he had scarce a taste or idea in common. Of my two-and-twenty years how much, or how little (I marvelled), had I spent in his company? And this being so, and a child so far resembling a money-box that one cannot reasonably expect to take out of it what one has not put in, my lord having never discovered an especial affection for me whilst he lived, got no tears from me when dead.

Our little church stands well, a bend of the Gipping stream curving around its acre at the chancel end. Built wide of the village, meadows come close to the grave-yard wall. As I stood beneath the oaken roof-beams, I could hear the scythes in the grass and cheery calls and laughter of man and lass; could hear, too, the faint screams of swifts wheeling far aloft as

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

their flight is in fair weather. The air without hummed with bees, for the sexton's hives were busy. All was life and service, warmth and lustihood, and I, myself, a hale young fellow, no longer to be misjudged and kept in the shade, but (as I hoped) with a place kept for me and my work before me.

From the brick-floor of the nave I could see, despite the intervening rood-screen, that Blakenham had not been unmindful of his duty. The chancel is full of Fanshawe monuments, and its floor paved with our brasses; but I knew of a blank space on the south wall, and this was sheeted. Trestles and ladders and mason's litter lay about; the work was in hand; the man had left for the day. I touched the sheet, reverently, I believe, but without a pang; it was ill secured and slipt to my feet, revealing the unfinished monument, white from the chisel. My younger relations know it well, yellower now with the dust of years, my lord and father's bust in wig and coronet, crowned with bays by the Genius of Civil Liberty, while Fame sounds her trumpet, and Religion points the beholder to the skies. At the foot of this classical composition, weeping cherubs support a pair of escutcheons, then uncharged. The entablature beneath bears a long inscription in Latin on which the engraver was still at work.

Beginning at the titles and honours, I worked downward line by line with some success to the last of his afternoon's cutting — *et uxor ejus*. The three words brought my heart to a stand with so horrid a shock that I can still, and shall ever, remember it with a sense of sickness. I stared, but the atrocious lettering out-faced me; there it stood, fresh cut as the mason's chisel had left it an hour earlier. Was there no one — nothing to tell me then and instantly what it meant — who had dared — by whose preposterous blunder — this thing had been done?

A step sounded in the porch; I turned to see the vicar ap-

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

proaching. He came with outstretched hands and a face of honest, worldly commiseration. We had always understood one another.

"Eh, my dear lad!" cried he, more loudly than a layman would have spoken in a church, "'tis a monstrous sad business, this. Yes, I buried 'em — both. You've heard the particulars?"

"Not a syllable, sir. But 'tis impossible. I mean, it cannot be!"

He looked me over with head aslant, fingering a nervous lip. No man hated a scene more cordially than did the Rev. Jack Bellasis.

"Why yes, George; life's a bubble, ye know. We must all pay the debt of nature — "

"My lord? — yes, I know; I heard of it in Yorkshire: it brought me home — "

"Gout in the head, George, there's nothing known for it; we must all — "

"But you'll not tell me that my — mother — " I stopt, my eyes pressed the question my tongue refused to frame.

He nodded slowly and jerked his thumb towards the hatchments in the dusk of the roof over our heads. There was my father's coat, and fixed beside it the square, uncrested escutcheon of a female heiress with the Chorley bearings, a line now extinct in the person of its last representative.

"But — but I've not seen her yet; I've come home on purpose — "

"Ye're too late, my lad — too late — inscrutable decree of Providence; common lot of man, ye know. We must all — "

I stamped, "Then all I can say is I can't and won't stand it!"

He shrugged a shoulder. "Permit me to enquire what ye propose to do?"

"Mr. Bellasis! is this all you can say? Is — is your office good for no more than this? Do something man!" I shook my whip at the epitaph.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

“*Et uxor ejus?*” He nodded gloomily.

“But — oh! this is all a mistake, come, now, I say. That damned thing can’t be allowed to —” I stopt again; the horrid pain of it, the wrench, the sudden insupportable agony unmanned me. One minute earlier the sense of her nearness had been so vivid, so pleasant, and the tones of her voice and the lines and movement of her smile. All the warmth and motherhood for which I had hungered the more keenly the nearer I rode; all the delights and endearments of reconciliation, renewals of affection, all — all and for ever gone!

My stubborn, bitter pride was punished indeed. The sense of my outrageous folly and wickedness poured upon me molten and fierce, and the quarrel that would never be made up, the injury that could never be atoned, the pardon which could never be asked — nor granted.

He took me by the arm and led me forth, and to the vicarage, still raving. The tears had yet to come.

My father, as he intimated, had been struck suddenly by his family malady, surviving by a week my mother, who, travelling to town to nurse him, perished in the overturning of her coach near Colchester.

Long we sate and late, and this, or my riding, or the man’s excellent old wine, secured me a night’s rest. He had sent for my saddle-bags and must needs put me up.

I awoke early with a weight of undefined sorrow lying heavily upon my mind, and for a while lay still and dared not ask myself why I felt so low. But the bitter truth would take no denial; I must arouse and face it, so drest and went forth in the cool white light of early morn for a plunge in the pool below the lock, and later to breakfast with such face as I could manage.

Says the parson to me as we sate at the board with our breakfast beer before us, and the scents of mown grass blown

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

in about the room. "You must to town at once; Blakenham will expect it of you; he is the head of your house now, and decency enjoins your paying your respects to him as soon as may be."

I glanced up from my ham and bread with a questioning eye.

"The Marquise will be still at the dower-house?"

"Why, yes, and with every appearance of remaining — as things stand."

"Is she so hopelessly single then? Is she still indifferent to my brother? I'll swear he is still faithful to her; 'tis a stubborn piece, is Bramford!"

The vicar nodded assent. "Never hotter than since he became his own master, and my lady never colder. Says she, 'Mounzeer' (you may know their lingo, I can't lay my tongue to't), 'Mounzeer,' says she, 'if I were free you are not to my *goo*; if ever I am led to the altar it shall be by neither a *jockey* nor a *corney*' (that's a dice-box, ye know)."

"That was a facer for Bramford; I'll be sworn he took it ill," said I maliciously.

"He took it most particularly well, George, and kissed her hand, and bowed himself to the door as a gentleman should. He will have her yet, and I shall live to publish the banns; my word on't, I know a woman!" He looked me up and down with conviction, and resumed: "O, there are worse men than Bramf—Blakenham, I would say. He has borne his disappointment well; fairly well. There's no gainsaying he was made a fool of, and feels it. No, I'll say no word in his dispraise, save as to his stud. To part with *Roysterer* was a sin, George! He never did know a running-horse, and never will; but he sets more store by the word of a macaroni, some damned fool (may God forgive me!) of a Frenchified town beau called Vyze than by the advice of his oldest friend. And what's the upshot? Well, ye'll hear soon enough." He paused, biting upon the

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

bitter cud of some disappointment, and began again: "What he will make of yesterday's piece of work, the Lord He knows!"

"Eh? what, vicar? I don't take ye."

He smiled a worldly, old man's smile.

"Ye were taken for dead, and not unreasonably, and your return from the shades will make all the difference to Bramf — Blakenham and some others, as I hear! But, there! not another word shall ye get from me! 'Tis no affair of mine. Get you to my lady's lawyers — yours now."

"Don't know 'em."

"You've seen their advertisement?"

"Not a line. I didn't know anyone wanted me. Nobody wrote. Who — ? When?"

He slapt his knee. "God Almighty, what a fool! Did ye never see the *News*?"

"Never; you know I read nothing, and have lived much retired."

He had left his seat, and was searching the dusty heaps of printed stuff, folios, broadsides, cartridge-paper and fly-books which littered his bachelor room. "See here, the value they set upon ye: *Two Hundred Guineas Reward*! Follows your description, out of date now, for begad, George, ye're twice the fellow ye were when ye left us. Turn the women's heads if ye will (and as ye will, poor souls!) but keep your own, dear lad, and settle early or 'tis all up with Fanshawe! Ah, here's the address at foot: Lawrie, Biddulph and Linklater, 90 Southampton Row. Biddulph is your man. I've met him at the Hall on her ladyship's business; a civil little fellow and shrewd; good manners, too, for the lower branch. Send for him to your lodging in town."

I laughed. "Would he come? Could I make it worth his while if he did? I'm a beggar, vicar, or to speak by the book,

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

a common fellow who has earned his bread for a year past. Look at my hands."

He looked the other way with an expression of restrained disgust, as though my remark had been in some way offensive to good taste.

"Ye shall tell me your story another day, dear lad; but that's at an end. Get along to Biddulph and claim your inheritance; 'tis worth a journey (and a Jew's eye), and as ye'll need travelling money — " he rose and unlocked a bureau.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTY

I COME INTO MY INHERITANCE

MY Lord Blakenham was at home? Yes. The younger lackey looked to the elder for guidance, both regarded me with veiled insolence. Something was wrong. I repeated my name, they shook incredulous heads; certainly they had heard of Mr. Fanshawe, the late Honourable George: I did not reckon to be he, did I? Both men were strangers to me.

“See here, my men,” said I, very civilly, “I have no cards, for I am but now home from travelling; be good enough to take my name to my lord, and say that his brother waits.”

They considered my demand behind the door; the younger sauntered off yawning, and was presently back with one whom I recognised as Bramford’s valet on his last visit to Suffolk. The fellow looked hard at me, hesitated, smirked, and bowed. I was admitted with apologies and shown to the blue parlour; what would I be pleased to take? His lordship was sleeping; had not rung yet, anyway. It was high noon.

“My lord’s bell, Mr. Sims,” said the elder lackey at the door; the valet vanished. I waited twenty minutes ere he returned with word that my lord would receive me, begged me to excuse his *négligé*. I followed the man upstairs.

My brother and myself might be said to have been upon the

CHAPTER THIRTY

usual brotherly terms. As a boy he had beaten me until I was big enough to beat him. When older, we had commonly disagreed when we met, our father siding with him, our mother with me; being neither of us vindictive in temper, we had kept within bounds and were now as friendly as ever.

"Draw up that demned blind, Sims!" drawled the voice I knew. "Ha, Doodles!" said he, addressing me by my Eton nickname, and stopt for a fit of coughing, "So you've turned up at last! I suppose I ought to say I'm monstrous glad to see ye, and begad, 'tis true, but" — he grinned sardonically, "there's many will sigh, Doodles, and that's a fact, too."

He was still in bed, propt high by pillows to ease his asthma, under the enormous coronetted tent-tester, fit for a king, of the best guest chamber in Old Fanshawe House, Clarges Street (sold and pulled down long since). Never had I imagined such luxury; his bed-gown and night-cap were of pale pink flowered satin, which wronged a complexion already accustomed to injuries. He looked thin and small, and was plainly in low health: there were lines about his mouth that no sound man of his age has a right to, and pale blue marks beneath weak and watery eyes.

"Sit, man, anywhere!" Every chair was heaped with clothing; I turned a masquerade costume of parti-coloured silks from the nearest and sat.

"Fore gad, Doodles, ye look well! — strangely well! A leg like a chairman, a chest like a porter, the bloom and colours of a huntsman! (But, ecod, your fortune will soon cure that!) Where the devil hast been all this time?"

I told him shortly, withholding names, but he did not listen, the lids slid down over tired eyes, he nodded and roused alternately, excusing himself on the score of not having drank his morning draught.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"Pull that bell, Doodles!" he yawned, as I rose to go, "ye'll breakfast with me." I laughed, " 'Tis past my dinner-hour, but what signifies the name? Yes!" He stared and bade Sims bid them lay for two. "I'll not detain ye at my toilet, Doodles; the *Gentleman's Magazine* and some papers should lie in the morning room if my cursed people ha'n't taken 'em to the servants' hall."

A paragraph in the *Times* caught my eye, "Robberies on the No th Road." "The audacious footpad, Samuel Smith (whose depredations last autumn kept the eastern Midlands on the alert) has transf rred himself to the parts between Doncaster and York. The North Mail was stopt near Dring Houses on We'nsday last after sunset, a horse being cast and the coach overset, the guard hurt, the bags opened, and every passenger robbed. The device used, viz., a rope fix'd across the road, is the same as that employ'd in the robbery of Oct. 2d last year when the Bath Tantivy was stopt, its driver's neck broke, and a Colonel Gunn of the Swedish service and a Mr. Doggett robbed on Maidenhead Thicket. On both occasions the chief perpetrator was disguised as a Quaker. We understand that H.M. Govt. contemplates increasing the reward (already standing at £100) to £200.

"No clue has yet been discovered to the robberies of horses, which alarm'd the gentry and farmers of Holderness and the East Riding last year, but it is supposed that Samuel Smith was concern'd in these also. The man is described as of meagre figure and small stature, dark hair, pale complexion and prominent features. He is said to be of such plausible and insinuating address as to easily ingratiate himself in any company."

A list of stolen property followed. Here was food for thought; the name of the highwayman hung loose in my memory, I had heard it somewhere, but, no matter, it was assuredly an

CHAPTER THIRTY

alias. That my old friend of the *Black Swan* had suffered at the hands of this daring malefactor I regretted, and pictured to myself how quietly he would have taken his reverse, and with what pertinacious sagacity would pursue the thief.

"Fore George, Doodles! I'd give a thousand guineas — if I had 'em — for your appetite!" He had picked at a devilled bone and was playing with a kidney. "Not that ye want the guineas, lucky dog!" I glanced up with my mouth full, wondering, "There! run and ask old Biddulph all about it! I protest I am damnably rejoiced to have ye again, but 'twill be the most cursed unlucky thing for some of my friends."

He spoke of Bramford, had I seen the tomb? heard of its progress, grumbled at the cost. "I swear, brother, this coming into an estate is the most notorious chouse in the world! Whilst one was heir-expectant the Jews would wait. Now, they won't."

Having, as I conceived, no concern with my brother's embarrassments, nor understanding of his allusions to my opulence (which I accepted as pleasantries), I presently made my adieux, promising to dine with him on the next day.

My appearance at No. 90, Southampton Row, created something of a sensation. Conceiving myself and my affairs as of small importance I had not writ to announce my coming, and the mention of my name to a clerk in the outer office made the man to jump as though I had presented a pistol.

An elderly person in black, with a brown wig, came tripping from an inner room, whispering loudly, "Who? what? where?" peering blindly over his spectacles.

"My dear, sir! Come in, come inside!" cried he, when he found me, rubbing his small, plump hands one upon the other and bowing over them repeatedly like a China mandarin. There were seven men engrossing in the outer room; all rose and remained standing until I had passed.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

As the baize door closed upon us, Mr. Biddulph (for this was he) drew for me the largest and softest chair into the best light, and invited me to sit. Observing that he stood, I begged that no ceremony should be used, for I took these to be city manners, and they irked me. Addressing him by name, for I now remembered his face at Bramford, I offered him my hand, which he took with every mark of profound respect. For myself, having never before spoken to one of his profession, it is possible that I displayed some nervousness.

I again requested him to sit; he thanked me for the permission, and we fell into conversation, he watching me closely at the first, but presently, having satisfied himself that I was indeed his client, unfolded to me my position.

This was one of the great surprises of my life. Brought up by my parents in complete ignorance of business, and having lived entirely in the country, I had spent little and had no costly tastes, contented with the horse and gun they allowed me. My tailor's bill had been paid by someone, probably by my mother, but dress had no charms for me then or since. As the booby of the family I had asked nothing and had been told nothing, nor can I be said to have nourished expectations, for a country boy thinks not of such matters, and to the day of my leaving home, I was but an overgrown hobbledohoy, eating what was put upon the table, little considered perhaps, but causing trouble to none.

Nothing that had happened since had raised my conceit of myself, nor had Blakenham's confessions of debt much moved me. He had always been in debt at Eton, and had always spent my allowance; he had been in debt ever since, and his appearances at the Hall were connected in my memory with uproars in my father's study, and acrimonious conversations between my parents.

"Never! my lord!" I had once heard my mother exclaim, in

CHAPTER THIRTY

reply to some proposal of my father's for her concurrence in advancing Bramford, "I've told ye once, and tell ye again, you have made a rod for your own back, but it shall not fall on minel!"

In a general manner I had supposed that such were the ways of eldest sons, and had vaguely speculated upon how much, or if any, would be left for me.

I was now to learn — what was news to me indeed. My mother's property, the Chorley estates, having been settled upon her and (subject to a life-interest of my father's, now lapsed) upon the younger issue of her marriage, devolved to me. The situation and extent of these properties I very imperfectly apprehended; her ladyship had never visited nor resided upon them; they had existed for me as names in which I confest no concern.

Now all was changed. Map after map was unrolled before me, pasture-lands, arables, parks, a chase, woods, mines, hamlets, boroughs. This red line meandering across was the Bridgewater Canal, a fact of as little significance to my dull eyes as the legend "*here is coale*" appearing in so many places.

The attorney watched me poring over terriers and plans of estate, which his confidential clerk laid before me, until the table overflowed and the turkey carpet was hidden beneath drifts of parchment.

When my curiosity failed me, and I lifted a dazed and puzzled head, incapable of imbibing more at the eye, he motioned to the man to leave us, and reseating himself, crossed his legs demurely, caught my eye, and with a little preliminary cough, took up his tale; and again the deference in his manner brought home to me that in some way, which I had yet to realise, I had become a personage.

"Is it possible, sir — pardon the question — but am I correct in assuming that your inheritance is a surprise to you?"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Two hundred a year would have contented me, and I said so.

He removed and polished his glasses, keeping his eyes closed meanwhile to such an incredible insensibility. He was wound up, and willing to be my instructor in this new and tremendous business of territorial magnate, but my obtuseness checked him, he knew not where to begin.

He came at length with a rush. "Sir, ye are the patron of thirty-one livings, and own two-and-a-half parliamentary boroughs."

"God forbid!" said I, "tell me no more to-day, at least. 'Tis plain I shall not starve. But if ye know, and between ourselves, tell me of Bramford, my brother, I mean, for indeed he seems as low as ever I saw man."

"My dear sir, we are not Lord Blakenham's agents," he began circumspectly.

"No? but you are mine, and for my guidance, and the relief of my mind, Mr. Biddulph."

"Certainly, my dear sir." He glanced from habit at the door. "You knew of the end of *Fanshawe v. Fanshawe*?"

I knew nothing, and now learned of the conclusion of that famous suit and the decision in favour of the younger branch, and the passing of the Northamptonshire estates to the Maskelyne-Fanshawes.

I whistled. "'Twas a knock-down blow to my father, that, I fear!"

"From which he never recovered, sir. The gout flew to his head and — and other troubles supervening — into which it is now needless to enter —"

"The York affair?" I faltered, presaging the answer.

"The York affair and other matters —"

"My disappearance?"

"And other matters; her ladyship's lamented death gave the final blow. A noble, a patriotic life, sir; the late Earl of Blaken-

CHAPTER THIRTY

ham and Bramford was a pattern to his order, a pillar of the State, and a faithful servant of his King: a service very inadequately recognized, in my opinion, sir, if I may venture to express it."

"But about my brother's affairs, Mr. Biddulph," for he was slow in coming to the point.

He bowed.

"In good time sir, my remarks (as you will presently see) are necessary preliminaries. His parents' deaths have without doubt injuriously affected the present earl. The paternal estate descends to him diminished in extent, and hampered with heavy costs, whilst her ladyship's income (hitherto placed practically at the disposal of your father the late earl) is alienated from the title and falls to you."

"He hinted at embarrassments," said I.

"I am not surprised. Indeed I will say more for your private information, since you have desired it, that my lord's embarrassments are unfortunately likely to become a public scandal. 'Tis a life" — he watched my face to see what I could bear — "painfully ill-regulated; there is no holding him. The unfortunate young nobleman is in the worst hands in town, and, if you will have it, a certain Mr. Horatio Vyze — Beau Vyze, the gentleman is commonly called, — a professional gamester, duellist, and leader of the mode, is his master."

"His chief creditor, may I take it?"

"You may, sir. 'Tis freely asserted that this person holds his lordship's engagements for a vast amount, and bides his time to enforce payment. They were partners in running-horses at Newmarket, but I hear the stable is dispersed. 'Tis play now, and we know how that must end. And that brings me to a matter affecting yourself, sir; may I assume that ye have not yet made a will?"

I had never thought of such a thing.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"Naturally! But, life is uncertain; a fact of which we have just had melancholy evidence. Your death, intestate, would place the whole of your property nominally at your brother's disposal."

"He would be welcome to it."

Mr. Biddulph paused upon his reply, sorting his words. The shrewd fatherliness of his manner, evident sincerity and mastery of the situation, increasingly prejudiced me in his favour.

"Ye will pardon me, I trust, my dear sir, if I point out that such a contingency would benefit your brother very little, or not at all, but would enrich the cabal of worthless persons who have speculated upon it."

"Upon *my* death?"

"Upon your death, sir, intestate."

"D'ye mean to tell me, Mr. Biddulph, that the man is so deeply dipped that it would need this enormous property to pull him through?" I swept an eye over the wilderness of parchments and awaited his answer.

"That is the result of our enquiries — instituted, I need hardly say, in your interests. Already the importunity of his creditors is itching for your inheritance. At their instance (I must suppose) his attorneys applied yesterday for letters of administration to this estate — yours."

"They supposed me dead?"

He nodded.

"If 'twould help him — " I began doubtfully, and stopt — no alternative presenting itself at the moment.

"— You would leave him, as he is already, your heir-at-law, but, as 'twill *not* help him, you will make other dispositions?"

"Well — yes," I replied, accepting his suggestion, for an idea was taking shape in my head.

"Then, sir, with your permission we will take time by the forelock and — your instructions for your will."

CHAPTER THIRTY

He touched a hand-bell, the same confidential clerk re-appeared, a fat-faced, youngish man, of uncertain age, who moved with as little noise as a cat, anticipating every unspoken want of his master's in a manner the most extraordinary. I had seen such a face before, the quick little blue eyes, the prim mouth, and short snub nose beneath the high smooth forehead from which the sandy hair (for he wore his own) was brushed back and tied *en queue* with a bow of black riband.

"Take a note, Mr. Cotter, if you please."

"Since I must leave all this to someone," quoth I, thinking aloud, "and to leave it to my only relation will do him no service —"

"Nine-tenths of it he would never touch, and the rest he would squander in a twelvemonth," murmured Mr. Biddulph.

"Poor old Bramford! Well, then, I leave the whole of it ('tis for you to put this into shape) to my friend Mr. Thomas Ellwood, Miller, of Milton-on-Derwent, in Yorkshire, or, failing him, to his son Abel."

Mr. Cotter's quill flew — his master looked up with surprise, plainly taken aback at my so promptly providing myself with an heir.

"No legacies?" he asked.

"Why, yes, now I think on't;" and remembering the few for whom I had any regard, I named Mr. Bellasis, Mr. Simeon Baxter, John Hymus, Mistress Medcalf, James, my mother's old coachman (a broken man since the accident), and Isaac Penington, Quaker, of Hitchin, adding, by a fortunate afterthought, "and yourself, Mr. Biddulph, for a thousand pounds apiece."

He rose and bowed, with evident gratification.

"I thank you, sir. We will have this engrossed by the day after to-morrow, and will wait upon you — did ye mention your hotel?"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"The *Green Dragon* in Bishopsgate Within."

He shook his head. "Not the house for a person of quality. *Fennell's*, in Bedford Square, would be more in keeping—a quiet house, sound wines, good beds. I will do myself the honour of recommending you to the landlord (they admit only on an introduction at *Fennell's*). Mr. Cotter will fetch your baggage."

The clerk, who seemed a very nimble and indispensable person, bobbed and silently withdrew.

"Invaluable servant that, Mr. Fanshawe; close as a strong-box, trusty as a Bow Street runner," murmured Mr. Biddulph as the door closed, in the slightly self-conscious manner of one who is aware that a capable man reflects credit upon the master who trained him. I bowed with an uneasy sense that this prodigy of virtue must be struggling with hourly temptation, for I had not worked afield four months for nothing, and the fellow's eye had a twinkle of its own, and a sly devil had peeped at me from out that sleek bullet head of his.

It seemed that much remained to be done ere my fortune could be legally mine. There opened before me an endless vista of duties to take up and offices to assume, of which I remember two, the being presented at Court and signing for my arms at the Herald's College in Godliman Street.

Having placed a credit at my disposal and given me advice as to a tailor, my man of business permitted me to escape, for my head was in a whirl, I needed seclusion and time to turn the matter over, and went forth from his office steadying myself for this monstrous change in my circumstances as a child goes steadying the full cup it carries.

My new wealth helped me little at this my first need. I yearned for a dry ditch-bottom, for an empty wheat-bin, the cool, recurrent splash of the wheel-house, for any lonely, quiet, country place wherein to sit and think, and behold — High Holborn!

CHAPTER THIRTY

Such square gardens as I essayed were locked, so were the churches. Paul's and the Abbey occurred to me later. For some hours I endured the streets, their moving throngs, their droves of pale, sharpened faces (would they never stop?). Strange, London had not thus affected me when a boy.

Late in the afternoon, my business done, and my stomach complaining of neglect, I turned into a chop-house, I know not where, found an empty box, and called timidly for a steak and a tankard of porter. The place was ill-lighted, and I had noticed no one particularly at my entering, but, looking into a mirror of bevelled glass upon the wall beside me, I observed the reflection of Mr. Cotter in chat with another, and remarked that the eyes of both were upon me, and, indeed, that I was plainly the subject of their whispered conversation. This other was a fine man, well-built and of a swarthy, high complexion and noticeable good looks; of distinguished carriage and well, but plainly dressed in a style, although I then knew it not, somewhat in advance of the fashion.

The man struck me as out of place and superior to his company, as a beau might be who had adventured city-wards for his business and used for the nonce his broker's chop-house as his *rendezvous*. That Cotter showed him the greatest deference, not to say servility, was evident.

The situation piqued me, for again and again as their lips moved noiselessly their eyes met mine in the glass. I, awaiting what I had ordered, sat with my back to them and my face in shadow, observing them at my leisure. Now Cotter was writing with the stem of a pipe upon the board, the beau read frowning, clapt his pocket, found a shred of paper upon which the clerk wrote afresh.

Next moment I was served, and they had risen, but pricked by curiosity, I made the waiter lay for me at the table thus left vacant, whereon I deciphred the words in gummy spirit "*Fennell's, Bedford Sq.*"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"To whom are ye giving my address, master quill-driver?" says I to myself. "Will this buck be for selling me trinkets or horses? We shall see."

Later, at my lodging, I broke the seal of a packet given me by Biddulph. It held letters from my parents, a round dozen, chiefly from my mother, which being addressed to me as "Captain," instead of being delivered to my lodging in York had followed my regiment to Ireland, had been taken at Castlebar and opened by General Humbert, retaken at his surrender, and returned to the addresses of the writers subsequently to their deaths.

How I felt as I read these last evidences of my parents' affection — voices from the other side of the grave — I will not trust my pen to describe. The Mantuan forbids us *renovare dolorem*.

It was night now, and warm as a midsummer night in London is like to be; the closeness of my room oppressed me; leaving the house, I sauntered around the square feeling sadly friendless, and had come within hail of *Fennell's* again when a man, apparently in liquor, for he leant upon the paling, bowed to me with some incoherent remark to which I saw no reason to respond. It seemed that my reserve bred offence, for in a twinkling he had drawn and run upon me. So sudden was his thrust that I could in no way avoid it and felt the coldness of the steel between my shirt and my ribs as the swordsman pitched into my arms. Drunk or sober he was plainly not to be trifled with, so, before he could disengage, I had kicked his heels from under him, and pinned him with my knee face down upon the stones. *Fennell's* night porter ran for the watch, and I saw my ruffian safely bestowed in the cells at Bow Street.

Thus ended an eventful day, which seemed as I lay awake in the darkness at least a week in length, such a multitude of novelties, emotions and events had been crowded within its

CHAPTER THIRTY

compass. "Another deliverance," thought I; "my fourth within eighteen months. It seems neither bullet, water, machinery, no, nor steel, can kill me, until my work is done."

"What shall it be?" and with the question came remembrance that for three nights at least I had neglected my prayers, a habit I had begun at Milton from learning by the innocent conversation of my little mistress that it was hers. Down upon my knees I went, and in remembering those to whom I owed duty — less by two, alas! since last I had prayed — remembered my poor brother, and wondered ere I slept whether in any way it were possible to disentangle his coil.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

DINNER FOR TWO AND — DESSERT

ATTENDING at Bow Street next morning with my witness, I learned that the bird had flown. Through ignorance I had charged the fellow with assault, a bailable misdemeanour. The case was called and the court crier bawled the name of Peter Weekes outside, but there was no appearance, and some looked foolish.

There was one who looked angry; over the bench loomed the eagle face of Sir Barnes Phipps, and when he had satisfied himself that his people had shown no remissness, he sent for me to his private room. He was mighty displeased; seldom have I seen so keen and severe a visage.

"Baill" growled he. "'Twas attempted murder! . . . Mr. Fanshawe, I enjoyed the acquaintance of my lord your father, and am glad to make yours. My people have been looking for you for over a year. And now, sir, you may speak plainly to me, for I am as much behind the scenes as any man in town. Have ye an enemy?"

"Never a one in the world, sir," said I.

"I am not so sure," said he. "You lodge at *Fennell's*, but so do others, though few of your inches, I think. Yet the rogue may have mistaken ye for another."

"He was drunk, sir," said I.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"As I am," said he coldly. "Know you whose hand is this? 'twas found upon him." He showed me a creased scrap with three words in pencil, *Fennell's, Bedford Sq.*

We were alone; the magistrate's interest in the case was upon public grounds. I thought well to tell him of the meeting at the chop-house and all I knew and guessed. I heard from Mr. Biddulph later that the writing was Cotter's as I had suspected.

"Did ye recognize this Weekes? His name is Ganthony," (I started) "late of the unhappy Fifth. Nor do you know this Horatio Vyze — Beau Vyze they call the fellow — who bailed him out?" He gloomed upon me. "There are some who have a heavy stake upon your death, Mr. Fanshawe. I wish I could lock ye up for six months, for I doubt you will hardly win through them with a whole skin otherwise. Hark to me, for you seem a sensible young countryman, and your head is still unturned by your fortune." I blushed. He went on slowly, striking his open palm with his forefinger to enforce his points.

"Play at neither dice nor cards, nor lay upon cock, horse, nor man for a twelvemonth. Quarrel with no man, and if ye do, swallow your pride and tender your apology at once; but hark ye, sir, on no provocation fight. Keep good company and early hours. Carry a heavy cane — a sword won't save ye, nor can I, but we'll do our best."

This was a sobering beginning for what I had determined should be a quiet day. The magistrate's advice jumped entirely with my own inclinations, who had not the least desire to put my new-found fortune to the hazard. Indeed, by the time I had seen my tailor and tried on in its tackings the coat I was to wear that night, and bought me a stout Malacca at a tobacconist's, I was feeling as lonely and as unked in this great crowd as ever I had done under the stars in Yorkshire.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

It was the 21st June, a great day for London. The King reviewed the volunteers, twelve thousand of them, in detachments, at a dozen open spaces east and west. I saw over two thousand odd in Hyde Park, and was near stunned by the huzzahing.

Returning to *Fennell's* to dress, I found a card upon my table. The Hon'ble Bob Dawnay had called, leaving his compliments and service and an address in Clarges Street. How he had found me passed my comprehension; we had fought at Eton, shared sock, broken bounds, and suffered for it in company, gone up the school together, been the most inseparable of friends until our leaving, and had never met or writ one another since! My heart warmed towards the laughing, mischievous, red-headed fellow; would he be changed out of knowledge, would *he* be a town beau, or buck, or macaroni, or whatever might be the latest name for the thing? I could not think it.

My hackney coach set me down late at my brother's door, the lackeys relieved me of hat and cane and showed me to his cabinet, where I found him looking better than I could have thought possible, but presently saw it was but paint. His eyebrows went up in surprise at my mourning; he had cast his.

I begged his pardon for keeping him waiting, but it seemed it mattered not, there were others later. I had hoped for a party of two and a talk of old times, or a word, if way opened, about his troubles. He saw my chagrin, for I act badly. "Couldn't help it, Doodles, 'pon my life; this fellow invited himself and another (or is it a brace? I forget — I forget everything!) Put 'em off? Can't. 'Tis Vyze, you don't know him. My racing partner once when I sat for Alderley. We owned *Barabbas* and *Rhodomontade* and some others, mostly crocks. Lord! what I've dropt on 'em! *Roysterer*, now: I profess we gave — *I* gave — a thousand guineas for the brute as a

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

two-year-old: ye see Jack Bellasis fancied him. Well, he never so much as went to the post — everlastingly amiss. When we broke up the stable Vyze took him off my hands with his farrier's bill, and — would ye believe it? — within a year he beat my *Rhodomontade* over the Beacon course, and won him a mint of coin. In fact, that match gave the beau his start. He was a man about town then, but he's the rage now; has come on to a miracle, lays down the law to Dukes, a devilish sight bigger man than I; goes everywhere; member of White's — they pilled me! Be civil to him, Doodles, for my sake!" he smiled, but there was a ring of anxiety in his voice. "The dinner shall please ye, my boy, anyway; do it full justice, for 'tis one of the last you'll eat at my table."

The door swung to the wall, the elder lacquey announced at his full voice, "Mr. Vyze, Capting Shooter, the Revd. Byng Anerley!"

You know how a marchioness enters an assembly room at a county ball, the magnificent, self-contained, eyes-front composure; how she sweeps the whole rout, as one may say, into the four corners and takes possession of the floor. More elaborately impressive, more offensively dominant was the entry of Beau Vyze. He sailed rather than walked into the room, talking loudly to his followers and swearing vilely at every tenth word. He was a great fine man of thirty-five, nearly six feet in height, bulky and rubicund with much good living, wearing his own hair unpowered in the fashion he had set, curled in three masses at the sides and upon the top of his head, pomatum'd glossily.

Before he was three steps into the room he had, in a figure, appropriated the apartment and all it held, and wore the airs of a conqueror riding into a surrendered city. Favouring his host with a nod and a finger and me with his back, "B.," says he, "my friend Captain Shooter; a demned good fellow! His reverence ye have met before." . . . "Crossed!" he cried,

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

continuing his interrupted monologue, "the thing was patent; a most demnable swindle. If Tom was not hoccussed I wish to Heaven I may never see another mill! I lodged my protest as the sponge went up. The referee demurs? — he does? I defy him to give it to the Linkman! All bets are off; ye may say you had it from me."

"Our man had certainly been got at," said the parson demurely, "I drove him home. He is dead."

"The deuce he is? Haw! did ye give him the consolations of religion, Anerley?" enquired the beau, snuffing (it was whispered himself was a son of the parsonage).

"Why, yes, and better; I got the truth from him down in writing and his cross to it before he passed!"

"Begad, you are a credit to your cloth! Wales shall make ye a dean!"

"'Twas bishop last week!"

"A dean I said, sir!" beating the man down with his eye. Before dinner the beau's temper was capricious.

"Ah, me! 'Poor Tom's a-cold,'" sighed the comical clergyman, recovering himself, with a wink to Blakenham, "and 'tis a monstrous pity, for I can testify that last night he was fit as catgut, and was certainly the best man we have had since Broughton. Now what d'ye say to this for his epitaph? —

*'Here Wiltshire Tom, the bruiser lies,
Cut down before his prime;
When Gabriel's trombone bids us rise,
May Tom come up to time!'*"

The room rang with guffaws.

"My brother, Vyze, permit me," said Blakenham.

"Your *what*, B.?" said the beau pursuing his eye-glass. He caught it with much deliberation, and turned upon me the unabashed, callous scrutiny of a coper inspecting a horse,

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"Your brother, ye said? damme, he's a good doer, B., for he'd cut up into three of you, and leave stuff enough for a light-weight jockey."

Captain and parson laughed uproariously and explained the jest to one another.

A young fellow but newly launched upon society will take much from an older man and a leader of the mode: his inexperience of what a gentleman should resent or pass over, and his repugnance to being set down as quarrelsome, combine to make him submissive. I had come to see Blakenham and meant to out-stay these intruders, yet this offensive familiarity so galled me that but for my brother's sake I had ordered a coach.

"My lord, dinner is served!" said the butler Vokes at the door. The beau took the *pas* unasked and unquestioned, and before I had crossed the threshold I had called my temper to heel and determined to see the thing through, for this man was the one to whom Cotter had given my address. In a different coat and a better light and uncovered he had not recalled himself to me at his entering; as he swung upon his heel to go I recognized the action.

The walls and table flashed with plate and shone with a hundred candles of scented wax. It was a room grandly proportioned, the double cube of the brothers Adam, running the full depth of the house with windows at either end, these giving upon the street, those upon the garden.

Blakenham took the head of the table and I the foot, my nearest *convive* being Shooter, a dull dog who laughed late at the parson's burlesque grace, and swore 'twas devilish clever and that he would be deed if he knew how a feller could put it together like that. After this deliverance the man knotted his napkin behind his ears, embraced his plate with his left arm, and fell noisily upon his soup.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

I studied him askance. What did he there who was scarce fit company for the servant's hall? The man's seamed, muscular cheek, low forehead and prominent ears shewed the fighter, and it occurred to me that he had been brought to Fanshawe House for a purpose.

For myself, having no reputation for wit to sustain, I donned the mail of silence.

Attendants marshalled by Vokes flitted watchfully around the table: never had I seen so much wine consumed so early in the evening. Two years earlier this scene of prodigal luxury with its appeal to the appetites, might have ensnared me, now it disgusted. I had sat at good men's feasts. Again and again the kindly faces I had left beside the Derwent came between me and this banquet of satyrs.

As for the dinner, it was beyond me; I was ashamed to partake of it. That a thing was out of its season, or hard to come by, seemed better reason for its presence than its palatability.

The beau tasted critically. "Whether ye know it or not, B., these ortolans of yours are but larks."

"Hush! don't breathe it, I beg, before the men, I mean," whispered his host in alarm, "de Beauséjour is plaguey sensitive —"

"Haw! a second Vatel? '*The fish fails!*' Will the fellow cut his *émigré* throat, think ye?"

"Heaven forbid! He is not a bad sort; was a count of the empire in Lorraine ten years ago, with sixty quarterings, rights of chase and market, and the high and middle justice over his people."

"The more fool he that he didn't keep what he'd got," remarked the cynic, who spared no man.

"Who was *Vartle*?" asked Shooter with his mouth full, but no one answered.

The captain guzzled; I mused; the other end of the table

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

talked for both. Horses, wine, women were canvassed, the latter, indeed, with astounding freedom; foul stories, inuendos, blasphemies darkened the board, lightened once and again by the parson's sallies, but these with each succeeding course grew more doubtful, the Silenus mask slipping lower over his purpling face.

I sipped warily, holding myself in hand for what might follow, remarking (as a boxer remarks his match whilst the stakes are driving) the beau's huge shoulders, long arms and broadened hands, the build of your waterman.

"Wine with you, sir! — Mr. George, ain't it? His glass is empty; sherry there for Mr. Fanshawe!"

The beau was speaking; my brother's silent-footed servant was at my elbow, my glass was brimmed with — brandy!

I raised it awkwardly, it slipt and all was spilled — (nor so ill done either). Excusing myself with simulated confusion, I vanished behind the screen which hid the buffet and service door and had Vokes by the collar.

"'Twas a mistake, sir!"

"Which mustn't happen twice! What have you?"

There were wines on ice and claret in warmed flannels. Whisking a bottle of Bordeaux from its jacket, I returned to my seat handling the screw, for I would trust none of them.

"Pah! the French lush! women's tippie, sir! No drink for gentlemen," cried the beau, pointing scorn at my choice with a jewelled finger, "I do ye the honour to take wine with ye, sir, not vinegar!"

"I hope Mr. Vyze will drink what he likes in my brother's house, and I'll do the same," said I, and a sense of confidence came with hearing my own voice.

But the captain, with an oath, swept the bottle backhanded to the floor, and half turning, with an elbow on the board, stared me insolently between the eyes. I saw Vokes drive his

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

men from the room, heard the closing of the service door and a key turned. It had come; well, let it come, then!

Small help was to be had from Blakenham who was fallen back in his chair with wig awry, hiccupping and fanning himself with a napkin, the sweat raddling his painted cheeks. His sudden drunkenness surprised me, his last glass of sherry had done it. Drugged or drunk, he was helpless, weeping for Lucille, and babbling of Sproughton and tender passages in a way that made my cheeks to burn, for I would not have breathed the name of my little mistress in that company for the Crown jewels.

It was a hot night, and though both windows stood wide, not a candle guttered.

Now, I had suffered severely once for a hasty movement and an exclamation, and had learned my lesson. Plainly my best chance lay in keeping my seat, and holding my peace. Even a hired bully pauses ere he stabs a sitting man who has not opened his mouth.

I would give away no point in the game; no, nor let them steal one if that were their next move.

It had certainly not occurred to me to bring my cane to table, but the captain, who wore the frogs of some over-seas service, had carried his hanger up-stairs and unhooked it before sitting; the weapon stood in an angle of a recess behind my chair, and beside it the beau's small-sword, the short rapier, light in hand, then carried by men of fashion in evening dress, but fast going out, and to-day restricted to the Windsor uniform and occasions of State.

These weapons were much on my mind in those hot seconds, for my fix'd resolve was to bar the way to them at all costs. There were ugly stories afloat at the time of the Dublin beaux, Killcoachy, Killkelly and Tiger Roche, stories which made a man grit his teeth. Men of this kidney wore an inch of bare

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

point peeping from a snipt scabbard, with which, when the humour was upon them, to prick the legs of some inoffensive stranger until the maddened wretch drew — only to be miraculously spitted, like a lark, men said. Just a smile, a slow step back, a headlong lunge, and nine inches of steel would be through the back of his coat before he was on guard. These were Irish manners, certainly, but I knew nothing of my fellow guests' characters to inspire confidence, and disliked my position in a locked room with a brace of ruffians, who had a fortune to gain by a sly thrust, and a tame parson at hand to swear it was an accident!

So whilst my bottle rolled across the carpet, and the captain leered upon me with out-thrust chin, I drew heels under me and kept hands still.

"Curse you, Shooter!" called the beau down the table, "do I or you manage this?" Then, after a tingling pause, during which I heard my heart thump and the click with which the master-blackguard shut his toothpick, "Gad, you're right, this hawbuck hasn't the heart of a louse! — *Skewers!*"

The man commonly used an elaborate drawl, but his last word snapped like a gun-flint. We were all three upon our feet together. Their chairs fell, I lifted mine high with a hand on either side of the seat (there was no room to swing it — Shooter was upon me like a bull-dog), and drove it down feet foremost over his head, bonnetting the fellow, as one might say. His hands fell from my coat-facings, yet something took me a buffet in the face. I cared not, but leaving him to digest what he had got, were it little or much, sprang sidelong for Vyze, who had reached the swords.

To my utter amazement he stood with his back to them, his hands pressed to his ribs, his open mouth emitting a shout of laughter! The room rang and echoed with laughter, nor to his alone. Afire with fear and anxiety, I spun round and was

caught in the arms of a man taller even than myself, a magnificent fellow, who slapped me upon the shoulder, still hooting and coughing with merriment, the cause of which I failed to discern.

It was Bob Dawney, grown surprisingly, and his chestnut curls hidden under a plaister of white powder. The door stood open, the lock burst by his kick; he had manifestly vaulted the table to my aid, and still he laughed, and still the beau laughed with him, leaning helpless against the wainscot, answering peal with peal!

"Bear-fightin', was it, Doodles? — looked deucedly like it, and two to one! 'Damme, I'm with ye,' says I, but I was too late, ha! ha! 'Tis a pantomime trick for Grimaldi! By the Lord, 'twould bring the very roof down at Drury! Where is Pantaloon? who the dickens is he, and how the devil shall we get him out?"

I turned, and there, at my elbow, in the recess stood Shooter, writhing stiffly, but pinioned helplessly in the chair, for his head had driven out the seat¹ from below into my face, and the frame passing downward and fitting tightly around his elbows, bound him painfully within it as with ropes. "But, hay! What have we here? — Swords!" cried my champion. "Won't do, Vyze; 'tis our rule at Knightsbridge never to skylark with the toasting-forks in the room." He caught the weapons and, still laughing, flung them through the open window into the garden.

"Now, I'm for ye! turn your man loose, Vyze! Which way shall we extract him? Head first or t'other way? Or is it a case for a meat saw? But — *Hulloa!*" his voice checking suddenly, and his whole bearing changing, "How came *you* here? Yes, I know ye"; he plucked a candle from a sconce and held it to the prisoner's face, "Keep your dirty chin up, ye black-

¹An early example of the detachable framed seats known later as "Trafalgar." — *Eds.*

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

guard!—Vokes! I say, Vokes, there! fetch your men!” His voice rang like a bugle, he stood there towering above the cringing creature in the chair and facing Vyze, who came with a countenance of majestic wonder and indignation.

“Sir! Mr. Dawnay! what d’ye mean? My acquaintance, Captain Shooter — ”

“*Of what service, sir?*” asked the Guardsman with icy politeness, his eye upon the beau and his hand upon the prisoner, whom he roughly bade to be silent.

“The Jamaica Fencibles, he says; indeed, I know him but slightly; at the same time, my personal — ”

“Mr. Vyze, you’ve been deceived — played upon; this fellow was Major Hogan, of the Spanish Guard, at Bath last season. He had marked cards upon him.”

“Stap my vitals, Dawnay! don’t say so! Don’t breathe it, for my sake! Marked cards! What infamy! And I brought him here! Perdition! *Un escroc!* Let’s turn the thing out, and let it run and forget we ever saw it, faugh!” — “Here, you fellows!” he called to the men who hovered at the entry, “take this person downstairs, get him out of this, and put him to the door!”

It was mighty well done; the man’s indignation rang almost true; his pose was magnificent; Shooter or Hogan could not meet his eye; cowered before him, and shuffled from the room into the hands of the lackeys, whilst his master, ignoring me, ran his arm through Dawnay’s with boisterous laughter.

“Ha! ha! What a dog you are, Dawnay! a devil of a fellow! Cleared that table like Harlequin, or Springheeled Jack, begad! Eh? rooms just on the other side of the street? Heard your old friend’s voice and stept across? No wonder; windows open and as hot as hell! Luckiest thing in the world for all of us; exit *le voyou*, enter the Life-guardsman. Ye’ll make a night of it with us, of course. What shall it be? The bones or pic-

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

tures? Bones! Done with you!" He rang for dice and boxes as if the place were his own.

The man's versatility, readiness and address, were confounding. He had taken my brother out of my hands a couple of hours before and now appropriated my friend. He was master of the situation, king of the company, seized the initiative, and kept his lead. No laugh so infectious as his had I ever heard; his broad, daring wit, dazzled and disarmed me; I knew that he had sought my life twice at least, supposing the brandy to be undrugged, but what could I prove?

Meanwhile, as I sat mumchance like the countryfied clod that I was, this audacious adventurer dared me with his eye.

To rid my unfortunate brother out of such hands was past wit of mine; nor was my own escape assured.

For, look you, everything played his game, and was food for his enormous spirits. The spacious *bonhomie* with which he presented Anerley, for instance, whom Dawnay knew by name, Anerley, who assisted his own introduction by emerging from beneath the table, whither he had fled for safety, in Blakenham's wig! My brother, who had slipped to the floor drowsily, awakened by the hubbub, crawling forth after him — ("like animals from the Ark") — in the cleric's head-gear, and fractiously refusing to exchange; in his treatment of this incident, I say, he set himself in the finest light, and had Dawnay half-slain with merriment, and convinced — as was everyone else in town — that there was but one Beau Vyze, whilst my glum face and lumpishness chilled the warmth of old friendship.

Then it was he and none else could handle Blakenham. With an irresistibly humorous solicitude he caressed and commanded him into submission, propt him into an arm-chair, where he presently snored, the parson's wig crowned with roses, the *roi fainéant* of our resumed revels.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"By-the-by, ye were on duty to-day, Bob," said the beau tossing a box to Anerley.

"Why, yes, you may say so, for 'twas certainly not pleasure, and lost me the fight. I rode at His Majesty's coach door for nine mortal hours; whew! the next man who likes 'em may have my boots! Hot! They would have blistered an ungloved hand and held the sun like a glass-house!"

"And which corps paraded best? the men at the Bank or —"

"The Artillery Company at Finsbury. The Prince looked vastly well in their uniform. He's their captain-general, ye know; a queer rank, ain't it?"

"Was the Fitzherbert handy?"

"Don't know. Didn't see her," said Dawnay shortly; adding, after a pause, "D'ye think, Vyze, honestly, there's anything in this rumour?"

The parson, throwing and filling, for the dice lay between us as we sat, hemmed meaningly, with half-closed eyes and a mouth that implied intimate knowledge of unspeakable things.

"Cough it up, Sir Parson, it lies too heavily upon your reverend chest," cried Vyze smacking the little man's plump back and adding, "there's nothing so demnably vulgar as a secret between gentlemen."

"They — are — wedded already," whispered the cleric, "actually, legally, irrevocably, if priest, book, and ring mean anything!"

"*Wha-a-a-t?*" cried the others.

"Fact. I've seen the lines; handled 'em. Know the man well who tied 'em up." He nodded confirmation, and throwing carelessly, the dice ran across to my hand and remained there whilst the talk proceeded: no one at the table noticing a dull fellow who, feeling hugely bored, aimlessly remarked a tiny blue flaw in the ace-face of one of the cubes.

"Those lines will be worth a king's ransom one of these days," said the beau darkly.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"And when that day comes, Wales will stick at nothing to get them — eh?" asked Dawnay softly.

"But my friend knows where to hide them," said Anerley, "his bankers —"

The beau cursed all tradesmen for rogues, and bankers for the most demnable rogues of all. "If the things were mine I'd trust no living soul; the proofs should sit, walk, and sleep with me."

For a moment the native wolf peeped out; the fellow had let himself go. I noted a jewelled hand press the brocaded waistcoat. In a wink he was himself again, the careless, lordly gamester.

"A main, then? What stakes? Please yourselves, boys!"

"Vyze regards your business man as an unredeemed bite," said Anerley; "now I like to think of him as trying to be honest and — occasionally succeeding." He delicately took snuff and glanced around him for applause.

I thought of poor hard-bested Medcalf, the Moorhouses, the Ellwoods, and others I had known, and my gorge rose at the thought of their innocent, laborious lives defamed by these lick-spittles. I loathed my company.

Now, the dice, of which I knew little or nothing, had always seemed to my ignorance the fairest of hazards, since no skill can controul the fall of them, and their chances are equal whether to king or cornet.

At that time all men of condition played more or less; my father, when his company had seemed to demand it, had put his guinea on the main with as little compunction as one of you (I fear) puts his upon a horse. It was the fashionable mode of wiling away an hour, and I myself was far from entertaining at the beginning of that evening the aversion to play which I held at its close.

That I would rather have stood out goes without saying;

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

the company was reason enough for me, but not, I feared, for Dawnay; my suspicions were incapable of proof. Had I meant to make a quarrel of it I should have done so at Bob's first entry; that moment was past, let slip with my usual unreadiness: it was now too late.

Nor could I plead want of means; my fortune had been the talk of the town for months. To refuse to play might give umbrage to my old friend, who might regard the caprice as offensive, unless indeed he fell in with my humour and left the house with me. But this was to leave my unhappy brother in the hands of men of whose motives I entertained vehement suspicions.

I would concede no point to the enemy. The hundred pounds that I had about me the rogues were welcome to, if they could get it honestly; what was such a sum to me now? I could afford to lose that and more; call it if you will the price of Blakenham's safety, or of Bob's friendship. As for the game, win or lose, at starting I cared not a doit.

A small card-table stood in a recess, the beau, who settled everything, put up the flaps and placed us, himself as my *vis-à-vis*, Dawnay and Anerley on either hand.

We began by setting mains of five, a couple of guineas on each, and in ten minutes I had doubled my hundred.

It was Vyze's throw, he toyed with the box. "Ye're a tyro, Mr. Fanshawe, I'll swear; there's no luck like a man's on his first night; we must certainly protect ourselves. Turn your chairs, gentlemen, and change the stakes!" He arose and spun his chair smiling, told a wicked story, vouched for it with a full-bodied blasphemy, and in the same breath offered to throw me for my winnings. He won, and proposed to double the stake and repeat the hazard.

"I have not the money upon me."

He laughed uproariously and, Dawnay chiming in, my resolution crumbled, and that time I won.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

The parson had dropt out. "Suffer me as a spectator, gentlemen," he grinned, displaying the lining of an empty pocket. "When that deanery falls in I'll demand my revenge. Give it up, Vyze, 'tis not your night, this youngster will skin you like a lamb." Dawnay joined in the jeer, the position amused him, it began to amuse me.

The beau smiled with what seemed a forced cheerfulness, and offered to set me for a cool thousand, three the main.

"Take him, Doodles, and I'll stand in with ye!" cried the Life-guardsman, and in a trice there were two thousand at stake and we had won.

This was all very well, but the dice which I held in my hand, and had just won with, were not the dice I had fingered before playing. What did this mean? or did it mean anything? I had little time for thinking, the Rev. Byng acting as chorus, "*Fritillus, jucundus fritillus!*" the beau playing fast and swearing loud, rattling the dice violently at times and indulging in frequent and sudden changes of posture, talking and gesticulating incessantly.

His antics struck me as ill-bred and extraordinary odd for a man who claimed to lead the town. Bob thought the man overcome, and told me as much with his eye; drunk he was not, however, but either taking liberties with his company or acting a part.

As for the terms he used, they were strange to me at the time. The parson quoted some 'varsity tag and cried "Venus!" at a good throw, so much comes back to me; the rest I have long forgotten. Out o' date *flash* is the sorriest of stuff, and dicing *flash* the stalest of all, for the dice are now universally reprobated, and, save for backgammon, forbid by rule in all good clubs.

I won and won again. Bob still backing me, enjoying the joke and grinning sardonic approval.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"Behold the man that 'didn't know'! Invincible ignorance!" ('twas the Rev. Byng again.) "Trust a novice, indeed!" he exclaimed, raising snowy little hands. "The town will be talking of this to-morrow; cry off, Vyze, 'tis madness to persist."

"Never! I've my reputation to uphold. Come, lads, I'm pricked, but still fighting; I'll set *four* thousand on a single throw, dare either of ye cover it? Aye, with each of ye — with both of ye — I will!"

"Four apiece, begad?" asked Dawnay incredulously, "*eight* on the turn of the die? Is it ever done? Well, shall we say yes, Doodles? harden our hearts and ride at it? Fore George, I'm with ye, whether at bear-fightin' or these things, 'tis plainly your night!"

But the luck had turned. In half-an-hour the Life-guardsman, to use his own expression, was driven against the ropes. "He has thrown double-sixes four times running; you and I are younger sons, Doodles, and I, at all event, have done enough for one bout. To bed, my boy!"

"Pull up, if you like, Bob, but don't go yet, I want a chat with you about old times, and will cross the street with ye in ten minutes."

"A bargain! I'll time ye, and if you have not had your bellyful in ten ye may reckon upon being carried forth neck and crop by main force; for, seriously, this is flatly against my advice, and there's the deuce and all of mischief may be done in less time than that!"

"Let your friend please himself, Dawnay; he is a rare plucked one, and I like his style. Younger son or not, his face is warrant enough for me!" said the beau grandly.

So we sat down to play it out by the stop-watch.

I lost fast and heavily, the beau keeping tally.

Why did I yield to this delirium? you ask. Partly, no doubt, from young blood and obstinate pride, not I verily be-

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

lieve for the love of play, still less for lucre. The hope of beating the fellow at his own game had come to me earlier in the night, the desperate hope of saving my brother's fortune by risking my own, if you will put it that way. Not only for Blakenham's sake, either, for the thought of this lascivious perfumed coxcomb, mouthing his fruity oaths as he clattered the dice, master of my old home, revolted me.

Owner of the entailed estate he could never be, but he would fell the park oaks that I loved, the trees I had climbed for hawk's eggs, would sell the Hall for its bricks and lead, put up my mother's harp to auction, and fill her boudoir with frowzy Jew brokers bidding for her easy-chair and reticule, aye, for the bed she had lain upon! I say this strung me to the fighting pitch.

For myself, truly I feared little, and pitied myself not at all; I had tried my strength as a man, and knew my hands could keep me honestly. As for this new mad inheritance, I had held it but thirty-six hours, had not yet seen stick nor stone of it. The thing had no claims upon me, but lay apart, unreal and unloved. I would risk its last acre to save the old house of the Fanshawes.

I suppose we were well into the second five minutes, and I was dropping my patrimony by farms at every hazard. Dawnay's face, when I once glanced up at it, was gloomy and long. The dice lay with me; my antagonist, awaiting my cast, sat back in his chair, with both hands plunged in the ample pockets of his skirted waistcoat. He had assumed this pose fifty times during the evening. What in the attitude and disposal of those hands seemed familiar, recalled some bygone scene or adventure, where and when? Except thrice in my soldiering days, I had never thrown dice before, yet — In a flash memory showed me a damp tallatt, the rain dripping from its thatched eaves, and a couple of Gipsy thimble-riggers sitting face to face dicing upon the upturned bottom of a broken bushel.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Could such similarities in action and attitude be merely accidental? In dress, too? The short tight *gilet* was coming in, was worn already by the bucks for walking and riding; but this fellow's loose, deep-skirted vest had pockets large enough to easily admit and release a doubled fist, the very counterpart of the long-bodied sleeved-waistcoats of those hawkers.

This was a crucial moment. Did I suspect? I did. I do not mean that for one instant I imagined that this man had ever gone a-gypsying, or that I had encountered him whilst myself upon tramp. No; those tinkers whom I had overlooked at their cogging had been lean little fellows, say half the size of this portly gamester; it was not the man, but the make of his dress, the placing of its pockets, and the play of his hands that drove me back upon memory, and first aroused, and then certified my suspicions.

I have been told that mine is a wooden face: it possibly lacks expression, and for once its homeliness served me well. The beau must have been used to study the countenances of his dupes, but for some reason failed to read suspicion upon my mask of tan and freckles.

"Time for one more, and one only! Cut it short, Doodles, you've dropt your guineas like a hero, or a jackass! aye, more of 'em than you'll ever see again!" There was deep chagrin in my friend's voice.

The beau smote the table lightly with his massive white fingers, regarding me with affected admiration. "Begad, you're a giant, Mr. Fanshawe! I've played with earls by the score, I've played with marquesses, I've played with royal dukes: but, for a loser, sir, damme if Wales himself is your equal! You'll conquer fortune before the night is out, trust a man who has seen some life, sir! Our final hazard, this? Well, 'last and best!' You stand to owe me sixty-seven thousand odd if I've

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

the count right! Double it: I'll set ye for another hundred and forty thousand as a decider. What say you?"

"*Don't!*" blurted Dawnay, with living fear in his eyes.

I looked my fate in the face, set my teeth, and drew long breaths through my nostrils, as I was used to do when challenging a big blind fence, some great overgrown hairy horror with an "if" on the unknown far side of it.

"*Done with you!* — seven's the main!" said I, and called upon every sinew for what I felt was coming.

Dawnay growled savagely, and turned his back upon the table, unable to face what he feared, but I didn't heed him.

My antagonist's luck — if it were luck — was phenomenal, for my first six throws were good ones; they staggered him; at the seventh he let pent breath in a sigh of relief.

The parson nodding in his chair roused to watch the biggest gamble of an age notorious for reckless play. They may have plunged more heavily at Versailles in the old time, but in London, I have been told, there had been no such stakes since Lord March rooked young Charles Fox for a hundred thousand guineas at Arthur's, at a single sitting.

It was the beau's last throw, and nothing but a double six could serve. Perhaps he held me too cheap, or his nerve failed at the last, why ask? The dawn was brightening, the morning air bellied the curtains and blew cool across our hot faces; a sneeze shook him, and for the fraction of a second *three* dice lay upon the cloth!

Anerley caught his breath like the hiss of a snake and sprang clear, for the table went over and with one word "*Cheat!*" I had the swindler by the wrists and we rolled upon the floor together.

His right hand was too strong for my left and wrenched itself free, was into its pocket and out again and was hammering my head (which, by the grace of God, is thick enough to stand

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

worse usage); I was top-dog and very strong and active, and when Dawnay tore us apart, the right half of my man's waistcoat came along with me with a shriek of rending silk.

"Doodles! are ye mad? What — ?"

"*No! look there, Bob!*"

Three dice lay upon the turkey carpet between us as they had fallen when the table tilted, and by luck, in close contact. But before Dawnay saw them, the beau's foot covered them and was in turn held down by mine, and we stood thus, knee to knee, he snatching at the rag of brocade, I holding it behind me and fending him off.

The man's passion was appalling, his language beyond imagination, but, as neither of us would budge, Dawnay thrust his bulk between, demanding silence.

This was the last thing Vyze wanted; the man was desperately playing against time, hoping for an inrush of servants, for the watch, for any accident. Clamouring for pistols (he was for fighting me across a handkerchief) he called upon his Maker to strike him dead if he stirred a foot until the word to fire was given.

"*Bob! Old Bob!*" I cried in my friend's ear, "keep your head, man! We have him! There are *three* dice under this foot of his that I'm keeping down! and I think I have my hand upon the fourth."

"Mr. Vyze! *Mr. Vyze*, I say! Listen to me, sir! Ye must and shall!" roared Dawnay, who was as much older than his years as I was younger. His great handsome face was set and formidable, his jaw as underhung as a bull-dog's: a man to fear and to trust. Sixteen years later, almost to a day, he lay dead, with just such a face, amidst a ring of Buonaparte's cuirassiers.

The beau had bellowed himself hoarse, his voice was cracking, he had no choice but to obey; but he held his ground, or

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

I held him to it, and the three of us stood pressed together thus. Anerley, white and quaking, set the table upon its legs and took post behind it, watching to see which way the cat would jump. But at the moment none thought of Anerley.

"Sir, listen to *me!*" Dawney began again, and his voice made the glass ring. "My friend here shall give ye satisfaction if I so advise him. He's no poltroon, and has fought before. (I've heard of ye, Doodles!) But you must clear yourself first—"

"Clear myself! from the lying aspersions of an unlicked cub? An insolent boor, a dastardly lout presuming upon his weight and size? *Clear myself? I*—with my repute, who am received everywhere? This serves me right for playing with boys! Wales shall hear of this, Mr. Guardsman! No! I will *not* listen to ye! *Pistols*, I say! *Vokes*! Where the devil is *Vokes*? Fetch him, Anerley and bring up the men!"

"This won't help you, Vyze, believe me. I'm expressing no opinion, but Fanshawe says you have three dice under your foot. You must move it, sir. Lift yours, Doodles!"

I obeyed. In a flash the gamester was upon his knees, pointing with both hands to *two* dice!

The trick was amazingly well done, for the fellow was heavy and tall. It confounded Bob for the moment, and well-nigh confounded me.

"And now, young man, I will thank ye for my waistcoat." He got to his feet, making a snatch at it, but I retreated. "In good time, sir." I was studying his face, his changed voice puzzled me. "Now, Bob, watch this!—keep him off me, man!"—I reversed the pocket, a die fell to the table, rolled, and lay, six uppermost. I caught and boxed it, rattled and threw, it was a second six! Again I threw, and got a third!

"Cogged!" said Bob, shortly.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"What d'ye say to that, rascal?" I asked, bluntly enough, for my blood was up.

"Pooh! Who hides can find! The clown placed it there, you saw him, Anerley."

"Faith, I did not, Mr. Vyze, and I'll thank you not to bring me into this."

The master-blackguard turned and treated the deserter to a steady look of the malignest hatred, ending with a menacing nod. Turning to me, he said in the same queer, constrained voice, as though his passion tied his tongue, "You shall meet me to-morrow — to-day, that is. My friend shall be here in an hour or less. Dawnay, you act for him? 'Twill be Wormwood Scrubs, I take it; so warn your grooms. Mind, I shall expect your friend's indebtedness put into a legal form and into my hands before I kill him. You take me?"

He wheeled upon me suddenly. "And now, my Suffolk bumpkin, my clothing! 'Tis not our custom to steal the coats off the back of the gentleman who has won our money!"

I wavered. Not so Bob, who passed to the front and took command. "Sit tight, Doodles! . . . Mr. Vyze, you go too fast!" said he, looking the man steadily in the face and not liking what he saw. "I am not so sure that we can meet you. In fact, I am sure we cannot. He swears to three dice upon the table and on the floor. I didn't see three, I own, but your conduct and attitude were colourable. You did wrong to throw yourself down as you did; very wrong, sir. If innocent, you could have stepped back and convinced us. Whilst as to that fourth die, ye'll find no one in London to believe your story. Fanshawe knows nothing of play, as any fool can see; you have said as much yourself. To say he tore your waistcoat off to put a coggled die where your hand has been half the night, is too thin, sir. Keep your paws down, if you please; I've no wish to strike ye!"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"I've not asked for your opinion, Mr. Dawnay. My character don't depend upon the words of a brace of bullies, a callow subaltern and his booby confederate, who owe me more than they can afford to pay! I demand my property. You don't expect me to walk the street in tatters."

"Sorry for your feelings, but we keep the cloth. That and the die — sawn across — will be shown at White's before you are an hour older."

The man's face worked horribly, unconsciously; he was no coward, far from it indeed, and had made his mark with small-sword and hair-trigger a dozen times at least, for such a position as his was not conceded to a nameless adventurer for the mere brazenly pushing in.

Looking us each between the eyes in turn, he plainly weighed the chances of a tussle. It was hopeless; either would have been his overmatch; Dawnay, in fact, was one of the strongest men in town. His eye blinked; all he lived for, aye, and life itself, had he known it, was slipping from him. A shudder shook him; he gulped and caught something in a bulging cheek.

"What have ye in your mouth, sir? Out with it!" cried Bob, and gript him. There was no reply. They hung together, battling, their elbows and shoulders at work, reeled back into the dining-table, cannoned off through tumbling chairs, Vyze, still mute, wrestling desperately, Dawnay fiercely vociferous. "Doodles! Doodles, I say! Hold his hands, keep them from his mouth!"

I sprang to his help; it was needless; our enemy, gurgling inarticulately, was fighting indeed, but fighting — *for air!* — eyes and tongue were protruding from a blackening face. Dawnay, suddenly aware, and inexpressibly shocked, released his arms, the man's knees bent under him, he sunk to the carpet clutching at his throat, writhing silently and horribly, choking to death!

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"He has swallowed it!" shrieked Anerley; "it sticks in his windpipe!"

What we could do was done, and done in vain. At the end of three endless minutes all was over; the great prone bulk lay there warm, and quiet, and dead!

I had never seen a man die before; the sight shook me. Dawnay straightened himself and gript my arm. I felt his hand quiver, and looking into his fine, strong face, and seeing the nostrils pulsate and a ring of white around the grey of his eye, felt it was time to rally my manhood.

Behind the screen Anerley was pouring himself glass after glass of spirit, spilling three-fourths, whimpering and calling upon his Maker.

I stepped to the door; Sims and Vokes, eavesdropping at the key-hole, were kicked downstairs for a doctor, and returned in a marvellous short time with a strange little figure in night-cap, bed-gown and slippers, to whom Dawnay gave his hand and addressed as Sir Ephraim. This was Gibb, the King's surgeon, whose house was in the street, the first man in his profession, but helpless at that hour as a barber's apprentice, and, in fact, from whatever cause, neither himself nor in a condition to practice.

'So, ho! An apoplexy, evidently!' hiccups he, "S—silence, if you please, gentlemen, or— or leave the room. What a devil did ye call me in for if ye understood the case? A basin, there, one of you! Towels, salts, and quick about it!"

We flew, and on returning found the surgeon had ripped the sleeves, and having opened the veins of both arms was cursing the inadequacy of the result.

At this moment a carriage drew up without, and a spare, dry personage, primly drest, entered swiftly and unannounced, his lean, vivid features looking alertly from beneath a little close white wig. This, though I knew it not at the moment, was

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Dr. John Lettsom, the eminent Quaker physician, waylaid by one of our messengers whilst returning from a consultation.

He spoke no word, but noting the symptoms made prompt diagnosis, and snatching up the other's lancet, was for instant action,

"Sir!" squealed the startled surgeon, "what do ye here? 'Tis my patient!"

"The worse for him and thyself, friend Gibb, for thou hast killed him, or as near as may be! Permit me."

"No, Lettsom, I will *not* permit ye, sir. I defy ye to use the lancet. 'Tis unprofessional for you to interfere; 'tis illegal for you to operate; puncture the epidermis, and I notify ye to my college and to your own!"

"I accept the risk. Stand aside!" He dropt upon his knees, slit the windpipe, inserted a finger and—recovered the die!

"Be damned to ye, sir! I'll report ye!" gobbled the surgeon purpling.

"And publish thy own incapacity? Tush, man! sink thy pettiness and lend me what skill thou hast; there is just a chance!"

With our help the doctors rolled the body from face to side, and side to face, working the arm in the vain hope of restoring respiration. There was no response, and after a few minutes the truth was manifest alike to faculty and laity. We arose from our knees breathless, and stood regarding the corpse as it lay upon its face and left side. The rich coat was ripped from collar to cuff. The waistcoat within had so suffered at my hands that the right side of it was gone; the shirt, opened at throat and breast, had slipped back, disarranged by our efforts, the white brawn of a massive shoulder lay exposed, and upon this, beneath our eyes, a large triangular scar was coming out more bluely every moment. The thing outfaced

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

us, there was no blinking or mistaking its significance: it was the V-brand of the French *bagne*.¹ Somewhere and at some time this gorgeous adventurer, this playmate of royal dukes, this patron of lesser nobles, this arbiter of fashion, had tugged at the oar with slaves!

It was evident that neither of these great practitioners relished the prospect of the inquest. Both declined refreshments.

"I could wish young gentlemen honester employment and better company," remarked the King's surgeon severely, viewing the broken chairs and tumbled dice-boxes.

"Amen!" said the other.

Says Dawnay, "Sir Ephraim, and you, doctor, I thank you for that sentiment; you speak sense and I'll lay it to heart. D'ye know this — person? 'Tis Mr. Horatio Vyze."

"God bless my soul, so it is!" cried Gibb.

"And this die that killed him," said Bob, "was a cogged die, a die he was trying to swallow. You will be pleased to take care on't, Dr. Lettsom; 'twill be certainly called for by the coroner."

The physician nodded. "And whose is this?" said he, lifting from the carpet a small copper token attached to a guard of twisted hair, broken doubtless in the struggle. It was passed from hand to hand; none had seen it before. The plait was of woman's hair, strong and dark, such a keepsake as a girl gives to her bed-fellow on leaving her convent.

Lettsom (whom I afterwards heard commended as a mine of curious information) opined that the medal denoted minor orders in some Italian rule. Sir Ephraim took snuff and expressed no opinion. From the manner in which they regarded one another it was plain both men were well apprised of the gravity of the affair, and of its importance in the eyes of the town.

¹ Signifying *voleur* — a thief.— G. F.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

With their help we lifted the corpse to the table. There we laid him and looked with revulsion upon that distorted countenance, as of a felon who had died under the question.

There was much one could have asked but none to answer.

"Cover that face," said Lettsom.

"And lock the room," added Gibb.

The pair then left the house in complete amity, calling in, as I think, at Sir Ephraim's. As between 'em 'twas a case of stale mate, said Dawnay, and would be forgotten over a bottle, for the Quaker, tho' hot, said he (as a Creole had a right to be), was chivalrous and placable, and in short an excellent fellow.¹

Anerley had disappeared, fading off the scene, pitifully unnerved.

My brother remained, snoring resolutely, not to be aroused, his head still garlanded with the roses placed there by hands now stiffening. Him we bore, chair and all to his chamber, summoned Vokes, the awed and self-conscious accomplice, and left the house.

"Come across with me Doodles, you promised — "

"*'In ten minutes,'*" I whispered. "My God, what a catastrophe!"

"Deliverance, rather, eh my boy? If ever I saw a win on the post, begad, 'twas this! 'Twas the beaten cock landing the fight with his last kick. But brace yourself, we have much to get through. What say you to our putting the whole thing down in writing whilst 'tis fresh in our minds? You have that pocket and the die? Lettsom has the fellow to't. Good! let me look at the stuff. This is vastly heavy wear for June, Doodles; why, here's something sewn into the lining — what d'ye say?" He ripped and drew a long packet of stamped papers.

¹A friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Samuel Johnson and other literary persons. — Eds.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"Bills, begad! *e*-normous amounts! but whose name is across 'em? . . . *Blakenbam's*!!"

We were seated at a table in Bob's own chamber, the great house around us quiet as the grave and light as noon with the cool white sunshine of a midsummer's morning. We looked at one another, haggard enough I doubt not, but with a sort of amazed, incredulous delight, too.

"Stop! I'll cast 'em up . . . Faith, you must help me; I'm good at such a string of oughts. But I make it a hundred and ninety-six thou. Is't possible? No wonder the poor little fool came to heel like a whipt lap-dog. Did ye know of this?"

I nodded, feeling slightly light-headed and doubtful whether I would laugh or cry.

"He was in up to the withers, and you were tryin' to lug him out — and — *you've done it!*" He sat back in his chair regarding me, finger on lip. "Good old Doodles! *Never* again will I trust appearances — *as long as I live!* Amen!"

He had opened a pen-knife and was cutting the signatures from the bills. "Don't touch 'em, boy, this shall be my job. The dice will speak for themselves, but we needn't publish this little postscript, I think; it's just between you and me and your brother — when he's sober enough to understand his luck. And now we must put in an hour or two of sleep. Is there anything more to do?"

"This," said I, and knelt; my companion, after a moment's hesitation, kneeling beside me.

When we arose he regarded me with changed eyes, asking almost under his breath: "Where did you get this, Fanshawe? You are no Methodist?"

"I am not. I have been seeing life, Bob, and I find this wears."

He bit upon the idea for a minute; revolving no doubt

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

what he had said when upon his knees, and ever his eye came back to mine with renewed surprise.

“Well,” said he at length, and I fear he added an oath, but ’twas the effect of habit, for army men and men of fashion in that day swore more frequently and abominably than do bargemen now, “Well, the bones are what I’ve sworn off: not horses; I couldn’t manage that. One thing at a time!”

“To Whom are ye speaking?” said I.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

THE MARQUISE WILLS IT

I MUST compress three crowded months into as many pages, and leave to my young relatives' imaginations the inquest, and the prodigious sensation which it aroused; the arrest, trial, and sentence of ex-Lieutenant Ganthony, and the exposure, flight, and capture of Cotter with his master's money upon him.

The case was placed in the hands of Sir Barnes Phipps, who promptly laid Mr. Vokes and the Rev. Byng Anerley by the heels, not that he had much against them, but for the sake of their testimonies against others. This, though very reluctantly, they gave, for the Habeas Corpus Act had been suspended since January, and once inside Holloway Jail they saw no way out save through the gate of King's evidence.

All this was, or seemed at the time, of small service to myself, who was brought very publicly to the notice of the town and exposed to the reprobation of society.

This may seem unreasonable, but will doubtless jump with your own experiences, past or prospective.

It lay thus: an enormous scandal in high life had been exposed to the remark of the vulgar; an associate and friend of the nobility, if not one of the Prince's friends, had been detected cheating at play. The rogue was dead, 'twas impossible

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

to punish him; the fashionable world, which stomached the *esclandre* extremely ill, feeling that its purity needed vindication, and that someone should be chastised, cast about for scapegoats, and fell upon Blakenham and me.

That the scandal had arisen in Fanshawe House was reason sufficient to exclude us for a time from society; but there were better reasons, to wit, my brother's notorious indebtedness (which in some manner he supported and continued to support, mysteriously enough, for Bob kept counsel and none guessed the truth), and my own behaviour as testified before the coroner.

"For look you," said the arbiters of morals at White's, "here is a boy, barely of age, with a regimental record of the worst, comes up to town on a Thursday and claims his fortune, and on the Friday night is not only dicing for two hundred thousand pounds on the main, but spies and exposes the foul play of a sharper with whom we have gamed for three years past without suspicion. This young rake (they agreed) must needs be the most finished blackguard in Great Britain!"

Dawnay stood by me stoutly, but himself was under a cloud, due, as I verily believe, to the jealousy of men who had been rooked of the man who had not.

All this was fatal to my hopes of reinstatement in the army. Here the firmness of the good King barred the way. It was in vain represented that having left the regiment months before it broke at Castlebar I could not fairly be held responsible for that misconduct. "But — but — but," said His Majesty, "if — if — if — the man didn't run away during the battle, he ran away before the battle, which is worse!" Nor could further representations remove this unfortunate impression from the Royal breast; and so rooted was the prejudice against me at headquarters, that during the ensuing six years, whilst England resembled an entrenched camp, and

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Buonaparte's invasion was imminent, my offers of service were constantly rejected, nor was I permitted to raise a troop of yeomanry upon my own estates.

These circumstances, added to the impossibility of being presented at Court, afflicted me less than his share of the punishment did my brother. To have lost the *entrée* of Carlton House seemed at the time a calamity. Too proud to beat upon doors that were closed to him, or to proclaim his innocence to ears that were well aware of it, he retired to Suffolk, whither I accompanied him upon a visit, and did what I might to interest him in his own affairs, and — (with infinite benefit to his health, spirits and appearance) in the management of his estate.

It was at this time that my faithful Hymus re-entered my service, in which he has continued until now. Mandeville, I will say, treated me well in this, expressing no chagrin at finding that his man preferred, as he said, to ride behind his old captain for love rather than to serve the best master in Holderness for a groom's wages.

Nor did I find the time hang heavy on my hands; that country being pleasant, to me at least, all the year round, and never pleasanter than when the slow stream is decked with lily-pads and studded with knops of buds, whilst the sedgy banks stand crested with pink bunches of the flowering rush and quaint pale arrow-head.

I had been down-stream on a morning early to get roots of the Golden Star of Bethlehem, or gage-flower, which blooms half-way between Bramford and Sroughton Church, for I was minded to send them to my little mistress.

My plants being packed in moss, I had put on a worm and was trying for perch beneath the willows near the weir, when the stately rustle of skirts trailed over grass reached me. Glancing round I saw a lady approaching, whom I recognized

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

as the Marquise de la Rochemesnil. Now for this person I had from my school-days entertained a distant and awe-stricken admiration, and, as I have already hinted, my brother had laid hopeless siege to her since he was nineteen.

The lady was fortunate in having accompanied her father, the late marquis, from France at the first beginning of the troubles. Her estate was invested in the British Funds, and more than sufficed for her needs and charities. She was believed to have no relatives, and being now near seven-and-twenty, and having lived the last eleven years of her life in Britain, might be supposed to be more English than French. Yet her speech was touched with foreign idioms and an occasional hesitation for the word, as of one who still thought in her native tongue, whilst to the eye of even such a blockhead as I there was not an English bone in her body. In grace of pose and of movement, in choice of dress and colours, she was alien still.

My father had known and befriended hers upon his first coming: my mother had ever been the kindest of counsellors to the motherless young foreigner. We had seen much of her at the Hall, and I, looking back to my tenth year, could never remember her otherwise than as a tall and handsome woman who commanded the respect and submission of every man who entered her presence, and who, having never seemed exactly young, appeared to grow no older.

Laying down my rod and whipping off my hat I went to meet her with a sense of pleasure at the renewing of old friendship, for this was our first meeting for eighteen months, the marquise having been from home since our leaving Clarges Street.

The little croft we were in was got green again since the carrying of the hay, and being next the Gipping, and bordered with a row of pollards, was both cool and shady. Mademoiselle Lucille came slowly towards me, bidding me cover with the

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

kindest voice, and I noticed that although pale and grave, her face was both softer and kinder than I remembered it.

After some compliments upon my health and travels, of which she had heard what I had chosen should be known, the lady came straight to the point with a frankness which astonished me whilst commanding my admiration.

"Mr. George, milord your brother has the name for being sadly embarrassed. No — do not interrupt me, or deny. I have heard what I have heard. Of his connections with the person Vyze I have long disapproved — I have deplored; but he was not to be counselled."

She nodded emphatically.

"But that is over, marquise," said I, "the man has passed to his account."

"So I have heard, my friend; may God rest his soul."

She lowered and closed her parasol. The fleeting restless shade of the willows let flakes of sunshine pass and return across her fine, grave face. "He was my husband."

This confidence struck me dumb. I could only peruse the lady's countenance with a new consciousness of its beauties; the firm round chin, the well-moulded mouth with the pencilling of its proud upper lip, the level brows and brown, compelling eyes.

And to think that these had once been won and owned by that lewd ruffian!

The thought plucked at my very heart-strings.

We stood mute and motionless so long that a redstart flashed down to the grass for a fly and returned to his twig. The intrusion vexed me. "Marquise!" I gasped, hardly above a whisper, for why should the birds and trees know her piteous history? "Why tell me this? What shall I say? What can I do?"

"Nothing, my friend, nothing; we cannot undo the past; I do not come to you for sympathy, for condolences, no; nor to

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

distress your good heart, for you are distressed — needlessly, too, as you shall see, when you have heard all. Yes, the past is done with; you yourself closed that book for me, as I hear.” She looked up at me, my great arms and shoulders, her eyes momentarily leaving my face to pass over my frame with the faintest of feminine tremors, “Yes, Mr. George, under the good God I believe I owe you much already, and so, come to you for more — in the present, this time.

“The man that is dead was an adventurer, a seminary priest of the college at Douay, Pierce Butler, by name, who broke park, as you say. He stole me, a girl in my nonage, from my convent at Laon. He married me at Reims the same day, and was arrested as we left the church. He had already sold my jewels. He was sent to the galleys.

“I returned to the Sisters until my father removed with me hither.

“The marriage was illegal and null: it might no doubt, have been set aside, but monsieur my father decided otherwise, it being known to so few, and these almost immediately dispersed by the troubles then beginning” (her hands gracefully illustrated the confusion of the time and the dispersal of those witnesses). “Also monsieur was proud; there was the name to be considered: it seemed better to dispose of the residue of the estate (most had been sold years before), whilst disposal was still possible, and to make the fresh start. The rest you know. The case might have been worse.”

“Far worse, madame; yet permit me to assure you of my deepest sympathy. Did the fellow ever trouble you?”

“He had money from me at times; I could afford it: but ’twas no *affaire de chantage*: I had the whip hand, he was always in my power, and knew it.”

As she said this she looked the finest and most self-reliant of creatures: no man, not even Vyze, could have broken her. How he must have feared her! I conceived him sneaking down

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

to her retreat for succour after runs of ill-luck, could recall, too, old tales of our servants' hall, the nods and becks of maids and grooms.

"But he is dead, Mr. George, and your brother is in trouble. He is still my faithful cavalier, as I think. He would not change. Now, my friend, I desire you to tell him exactly what I have told you, and that the impediment is removed."

It was evident that no suspicion had crossed her mind of the perfection and finality of her lover's ruin. He, as she supposed, at his last guinea, broken in health, in repute and fortune, she came with her splendid person, ability, and ample means, to place all at his disposal.

I suppose I looked my wonder.

"Do not be hard upon poor Mowbray, my friend; *you* have suffered from all accounts and, I hope, and can well believe, as I look upon you, that you have grown wise. So will he, for he is a gentleman and no *canaille*; he too, a little late *peut-être*; *après coup Bourguignon est sage*; but that is his affair — and mine. Tell him Lucille de la Rochemesnil will receive him. Adieu!"

She extended her hand in dismissal as a queen to one of her servants. I bent and kissed it.

It fell exactly as she willed. She took him, married him, and made as near a man of him as he was built to be; governing him wisely until the day of her death. Nor did your grandfather long outlive her.

None of you remember her; you must study the great Romney in the oak dining-room at Bramford if you would see how she looked in her prime. You have all of you more of your grandmother than you know; the Fanshaws are now dark men with brown eyes, her eyes and complexion, and a certain repose and hardness which I observe in you are, I think, recent grafts upon our stock. She was a remarkable woman, and by her fortune and ability restored our house.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

A COMEDY OF ERRORS

IT was at the closing-in of a wet October evening that I rode under the court-yard archway of the *Jack of Newbury* at Great Bedwyn.

During the two months since my brother's wedding — (a very quiet affair) — I had been almost daily in the saddle. My desire had been to see my estates and make acquaintance with my tenancies in their homes, and not in the formal and festive way of rent-ales, where fulsome compliments are acknowledged by uncandid speech and no common understanding is to be gained.

Personal talks between man and man upon the lands which yielded a livelihood to both had seemed a pleasanter and more promising method.

Milton I had seen again, finding my good friends as kind, but no kinder, to George Fanshawe in broad-cloth than they had been to him in fustian.

Abel's pleasure was as evident as that all-but tongue-tied man could evince. He had me up and down the box-walk hearing all I could tell him of my new prosperity and my schemes for the improvement of my people, taking it all in with tight lips and absorbent eyes, approving, insatiate of hearing my news, but — as if by some natural defect — unable to give me of his own.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

"And now 'tis your turn," I said at length; "tell me how goes the world with you."

"The mill — " he began after his usual considering pause, for he seldom broke silence in haste.

"Never mind the business; 'tis yourself I want to hear about."

"My father, as thou sees — "

"Is admirably well, yes; and Mrs. Ellwood's walking powers increase, which is also admirable; and Miss Phoebe speaks for herself — cannot you?"

"Me? Oh, I am much as usual, George, I thank thee."

"Which tells me nothing. Now, Abel, I am for close quarters for once. This load, can I help lift it?"

He stiffened, and was once more the cold, self-contained man concealing some inward wound beneath his armour. I waited.

He had long carried himself — how shall I say? as a man does who knows he is stricken by some grim internal disorder which grows and worsens and will some day need the knife.

Such an one, if a brave, good fellow, sees no wisdom in whining, or in asking the sympathy of others, but goes steadily on with his business, something the sterner and the keener, perhaps, because of that imminent audit.

So, I say, my friend's bearing seems to me, looking back upon him across the years, for at the time I had no experience of such an illness as this to which I have likened his trouble.

"I thank thee, no. Thou canst not help me. No one can."

"Save God?" I whispered.

"Save God," he assented; "I must carry my burden alone, George."

"But if ever I can help you, will you use me?" I demanded. He pressed my arm and nodded. The economy of words meant nothing; the look everything. I was content.

And with that came light-running feet and my little mis-

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

tress was upon us with sweet, half-breathless laughter, and would take me to her own water-garden below the mill to shew me the rush-plants I had sent, and the dryer grassy spot where my *Gageas* were set. "O, it is like old times to have thee safe back again, George! It is as when I was quite little, and Sam and Abel were boys, before they went to Ackworth and all the trouble came. If only he could come back too, and Abel be merry again!"

Sam? who was Sam? I wondered; new thoughts spinning in my thick head. She had begun to me, but ended to herself in a lower key, unconscious that she was thinking aloud, for she was a lonely child among elders, and, as children will, acted the life of her phantasy when alone, conversing much to herself aloud.

The cloud was quick in its passage; childlike, her spirits heightened at sight of some outward object bringing sunny memories.

"See, George! there goes a kingfisher! What a shrill note! It has settled on the willow by the sluices."

She would shew me the hole running up into the overhanging bank whence the brood had flown three months before.

"We found them the day after thou left. They were full-feathered; the oddest little blue things with stumpy tails. No, not so bright as the mother-bird, and ravenous for minnows and loach. After they left the hole they would sit seven in a row on the rail and squeak for food all day!"

She had been upon her knees peering over the brink, the brown water spinning below; now she half arose, supported on a knee and a hand, looking up at me, the freest, gracefullest young figure, wholly unconscious of its grace. The child was looking charmingly well, the summer heats had touched her chin and cheeks with a most delicate golden brown, and flecked them lightly here and there with the tiny freckles that would

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

go before winter. Her eyes were starry, as alive as a woman's, and as unconscious of sex as a five-year-old child's, and between them her small nose stood smooth as a fresh-laid robin's egg when the yolk within flushes pink through the thin shell.¹

My own eyes fell. My God! I dared not look upon her longer. What was I, a lumbering brute with a brute's instincts and weaknesses, to aspire to such holiness?

Yet her innocent delight in my company filled me with a fluttered pleasure. "She is but a child," thought I, "untouched by the breath of passion. It were cruel to disturb such a happy morning dream before the hour for waking. Fifteen she is, and two-and-twenty am I; surely I can wait three, or it may be four, years for my bud to unfold."

And with that I remembered the Friends' dislike of early marriages, and their view that a woman should have turned twenty before her wedding, and so, taking a leaf from Abel's book, I said nothing of my hope to any, but locked it away softly and warmly in my breast until the right hour should strike.

But I must be getting back again to the *Jack* at Great Bedwyn, where I see I started this chapter, and must first explain how I came to be there. It was this way: I had rid south from Cheshire upon a sudden resolve to see my Wiltshire estate, and had turned aside to the inn I have named, a hostel of no great size in a decayed borough upon the skirts of Savernake Forest. I had ne'er set eyes upon the place before, and took a dislike to it at first sight. If you know the house you will be wondering what had induced me to submit to the discomforts of an inn of its class when one of the best upon the Bath road lay but four miles farther on. The fact was I had accepted an appointment by letter to meet a man here upon the following morning.

¹The egg of the English robin is not blue, as is ours, but of a delicate flesh tint overcast with specks of fawn colour. AMERICAN EDITOR.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Whilst travelling I was selecting mounts for the approaching hunting season, and was finding the class of animal I required not too abundant. Fifteen stone and over did I ride, and a half-bred I would not look at: hence, when a letter reached me at Bath from a person living at Lambourn Woodlands, offering a horse which seemed of the stamp that I wanted, I had fallen in with my unknown correspondent's suggestion to meet him at Bedwyn for the trial he offered.

I had anticipated a dull little place: to my surprise the house was humming like a hive, a-shine with candles, roaring with songs and laughter; something by-ordinary was afoot.

Tossing my rein to the soberest of the ostlers, I made my way through the yard-entry to the bar. A bouncing, red-cheeked dame with side-curls and cap-strings flying ran cackling round a corner of the passage into my arms, chased by a jovial gentleman holding an empty rummer. The pursuer sheered off in humorous confusion, shutting the door of a private room upon a chorus of male laughter, which was echoed by chambermaids upon the landing overhead.

"Heyday, madam!" I cried, "Is it another victory? And where were the French? and have ye run short of laurels?"

"La! Mr. George, sir, how ye made me jump! Really, sir, Bevington is too free entirely. If he don't mend I declare I'll forbid him my house, I will; for a lone widow woman must protect her character. But, I beg your pardon, sir! *Mr. George*, did I say? — whom am I speaking to?"

"Yes, ma'am, you have made a good guess; George is my name, George Fanshawe. Can ye put me up for the night, madam, myself, two servants, and four horses?"

She let my question pass, looking me up and down with a face of puzzlement, wherein misconception as to my identity slowly receded before the fact. Another effort seemed needed to satisfy her self-respect.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

"But ye *are* Mr. Fanshawe, sir, surely? I mean his brother. There! drat it! I know not what I do mean. Well, well!" and with that the woman fell a-choking and excusing herself. It seemed there was some gentleman of my name already in the house who resembled me enough to justify mistakes between the lights.

What touched me more closely was finding that my namesake and his party had taken up all the accommodation the place afforded, whether for man or beast. In short the best terms I could offer only procured me a cupboard for myself and a stall for one horse. Hymus with the dog-cart and spare nags must go the four miles farther to Hungerford, where at the *Bear* they would find bait and lodging.

Having sent my valise to my room and seen my men off, I sought such information as the stablemen might be able to supply as to my unknown correspondent regarding the horse. This was little enough, for most were strangers, servants of guests, whilst of the ostlers, Bedwyn born, all knew Lambourn and a Mr. Smith, several indeed of the name, but which Mr. Smith it would be was a question I got little light upon. J. was the initial of my man's Christian name, but whether this stood for John Smith, of Rooksnest, James, of Seven Barrows, Jacob, of Lower Cross, or Joseph, of Chilton Foliat, none would undertake to say, but doubtless the morning would show.

I was shown to my room; it was better than my fears; my landlady's apologies seemed needless; but there, as you shall presently see, my gratulation was premature.

The smiling maid who preceded me, candle in hand, in place of retiring bobbed deferentially at the door with something for my private ear which the racket on the landing outside momentarily deterred her from imparting. Was there anything Mr. Fanshawe needed? Nothing, I assured her. Upon a quick glance down the corridor she closed the door and set her back to it, summoning me with a face of breathless anxiety.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"Dwont 'ee go for to put your top-bwoots out, zur; I dur-sen't say no mwore!"

I stept to her side. She held her ground, was not joking, was bent indeed on warning me against some joke of a too practical nature meditated by others. Her voice was hurried and low — a man treading heavily paused at the door without. "There, zur," she whispered, "I've guv ye the office; I can't do no mwore. He's a-listening!" then shrill and laughing. "Lord, zur, dwon't zur, I'll tell missus!" she whisked from the room, leaving the door wide.

The fellow regarded her doubtfully, affording me time to force a smile before he turned to me with, "Bwoots, zur?" "Presently, my man," I replied, tipping him a wink and a shilling, with which he stumbled off downstairs, leaving me amused at the incident.

But it was an hour of misconceptions. A rapping upon the door presently apprised me of another claimant for the bed. This was the body-servant of my namesake, and since it appeared I had been shown to a chamber bespoke some days previously for his master, I had no choice but to exchange it for a closet upon an upper floor, a sort of Little-Ease, in which, as it was impossible for me either to stand erect or lie at length, I felt tempted neither to linger over my dressing nor to retire until too weary to sit longer below.

They laid for me in a corner of the public room amid extraordinary noise and bustle. The house was full of sportsmen, some of whom had travelled from town to see a match against time to be ridden on the morrow. There seemed to me two parties, or cliques of them, of which the snobs outnumbered the gentlemen.

Although I took no sort of interest in the matter, I could not avoid hearing something of what was afoot, for these gentry took themselves and their business very much for granted, and

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

names flew, my own among others, for it seemed that a Fanshawe was in it, and deeply in it, for it was agreed that he had "put his boots" on the issue. Nor he alone (whoever he might be), but Captain this and Cornet that of the Household were mentioned as backers for serious sums. Growled a man in the next box to mine: "The quality has plunged on this leetle gamble; if the quality loses, can the quality meet the bill? How do we stand, I wonder? I've big Bob Dawnay upon my book for —" and here the voice dropt to a whisper, but methought I had heard the name of an old friend in a connection which did him but little credit.

What puzzled me was such a concourse to witness the start, the finish being usually held the better station. But the matter was no concern of mine except that the clatter and running about of distracted drawers and maids made it hard for me to get served, dishes ordered by others being laid before me and *vice versa*.

Later I turned out to see to the bestowal of my horse, which I found in a detached coach-house converted to stabling for the nonce, and was loosening the beast's surcingle to straighten a shifted rug, working by touch, for the place was in darkness, when two persons stept inside the door to shelter from the weather. Said one:

"Ye sent my name to him?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Sam —"

"Curse your 'Sams'; how often am I to tell ye?"

"Pardon, humbly, a'm sure, zur. No, he'll not see ye. Twold the gal a knew nothin' about ye. Fact is, he's dinin' wi' some on 'is party, and be a bit on by thick."

"Party? what party?"

"Bless yer soul, zur, thick house be bung full o'm; vive-and-twanty at the least, and ivery lwoose box and stall teaken days ago! Thick match agin time as he's to ride to-morrow be a

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

big thing; there's a blame sight o' money on't. 'Tis from here to Reading."

The listener whistled softly.

"That'll do. . . . Well, 'night to ye. I'm off back. Ye saw me start by the Ramsbury Road; mind that! Ye take me?"

A minute later, having got the tongue of the buckle into the right hole and made my beast as secure as circumstances permitted, I was taking a mouthful of fresh air in the village street before seeking my closet.

The rain had ceased, but it was wet and soft under foot, for some burgess was ill and tan lay across the road. I had ceased to expect Mr. J. Smith, who had neither sent nor written to the house, and was turning again towards the *Jack* when a horseman came from under the archway. Two lighted windows threw ruddy bars across the dark street. As he passed into the first my heart leapt, for here, close upon me, was Abel Ellwood! He popped into the darkness again, and next moment was again in the light and nearer, shewing me my mistake. The rider's size and build and form of countenance bore the strongest superficial resemblance to my friend's; but there the likeness stopt, lacking the nameless touch of the individuality I knew, or stamped with its own and alien impress. He passed me closely, and I, myself in darkness, saw him well, thrown upon the black background of the night by the strong light, and felt sure I had seen him before; yet only when he had become a shapeless bulk in the gloom did I recall the fighter of the roadside battle at the *Barn Inn*, and that other—or the same—who had strolled so coolly through the crowd hurrying to Ouseby bull-ring.

"This Sam Brown, or Jones, or Robinson, or whatever the coachman called him, travels far afield to sell his malt," said I, wondering vaguely at having run against the man for the third time.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

By this time the stables were quieter and in better order; one loose-box in special might have been a condemned cell on the night before execution, so closely was it barred and so grimly watched by cudgel-bearing ostlers seated upon up-turned buckets. One of these got to his feet at my approach, pulling his forelock and grinning, "Why, yes, sir," said he, "be there hanythink — ?" and then, turning suddenly foolish, cursed his eyes and roughly warned me off.

If the yard were under strict rule the rest of the house owned none. They had closed the bar, but quarrelling, wagering, singing and horse-play were in full swing. Men were bawling for drink who had drunk well already, whilst a knot of cockney sportsmen were besetting the door of a private room demanding admission, or that at the least someone whom they called "His Ludship" should make them a speech.

These proposals were resisted by the more intimate friends of the popular hero on account of the lateness of the hour and the need for their man to retire at once in view of his engagement. Eventually, I believe, the door was forced, for I saw a tall young fellow, well advanced in liquor, dragged hither and thither, chaired in the passages and toasted with uproarious good fellowship.

Every corner and settle was occupied by cronies disputing the chances of the morrow's event. "He'll ne'er do it, 'tis a welter impost; no horse ever foaled could carry the weight!" "I tell 'e he *has* done it, and what's more he knows the road and will be making for his stable."

Said a second voice, "We'll have a safe journey back to town. As I changed at Reading coming down they were saying that Sam Smith the highwayman was on his trial there to-day for the Thicket robbery and hadn't a leg to stand on. The rascal was disguised as a Quaker when taken, and the best of the joke is that he swears he is one!"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"Ho! ho! that won't wash. Who tries the case?"

"Sir Algernon, I suppose; he rides that circuit,¹ don't he?"

Having supped, I had leisure to read a letter from my good Colonel Gunn which had followed me to Bath, and having been put into my hand at my leaving the *Full Moon* Inn that morning had awaited my leisure.

"I know not your present neighbourhood, my friend," wrote the old soldier, "but am sending these to your brother's house to be kept or forwarded as may be.

"Some waif word of your fortune has reached me, whereon I hope to present my gratulations more fully when next we meet.

"As you may have heard I was near a year ago the victim of a small but annoying mischance, when the Bath mail, and I among other passengers thereby, was robbed at a place upon the border of Berkshire. The crime had points of singularity, was a piece of strategy, indeed, and the thieves escaped for the time with their plunder. It appears that the Crown has laid the chief perpetrator by the heels and needs the testimony of your old friend to convict him. In a word I am summoned under some process of your English law to appear for the pursuer, in this case His Majesty. As I must needs pass through London I will do myself the honour of calling upon you."

I have never had too many friends, and the prospect of

¹Sir Algernon Maskelyne-Fanshawe was taking the Oxford Circuit for the Autumn Assizes that year. — G. F.

[Footnote, which may be skipped by the hasty reader.]

The triviality of all this may well surprise you. The year 1799, though unmarked by the horrid catastrophes which reddened some others, was disquieting enough to such as had eyes to see or brains to read the signs of the times.

The Jacobins had fallen out among themselves, but that had not prevented them from crushing the unhappy Switzers. We held their forces cooped up in Egypt, but General Buonaparte was let slip through our fingers, a dropt catch which would cost us many a run, almost the match, indeed.

Our people fondly saw, or thought they saw, signs of the French nation returning to

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

greeting the good soul who had so staunchly stood by me at a pinch filled me with pleasure. I had some dim recollection of the circumstances to which he referred: had I not seen the account of it in the *Times*, whilst awaiting a meal somewhere? — at my brother's house in Clarges Street possibly. There was more in the letter, for the colonel was a good correspondent, but the increasing confusion of my surroundings made reading difficult.

From this I made my escape the more willingly that I was twice accosted by mistaken or bemused fellow guests demanding that I should drink with them success to my next day's work.

Nor was the rustic cupid idle; fumbling my way darkling bedwards I was the unwilling recipient of a tender embrace and the assurance, "S'elp me, Doll, I love ye above all flesh except bacon!" To which the nymph, herself unseen, having (by what sense who knows?) found her lover's ear in the darkness, saluted the same with a sounding cuff and the counsel to "Gi' out, and lat the gentleman get by."

"Yer candle, zur," she added somewhat breathlessly as its senses to seek peace and find pardon at the feet of its legitimate sovereign, and as one means towards this desirable end, we, our Government, I say, were concocting a plan for landing some of the more desperate spirits among the *émigrés* at suitable points on the French coast to start a civil war!

This might pass; the scheme to assassinate Buonaparte which was ravelled up with it, for which, I fear, English arms and English money were found, is not so easily stomachied.

You who have read Mr. Alison's history will doubtless have imagined that we in England meanwhile felt in the presence of the events themselves as feverish, as breathless, as you felt at their recital, and could hardly contain our anxieties or converse upon ordinary affairs.

No mistake could be greater, for, to begin, the historian presents to you in one picture to-day the results of a thousand separate sketches and studies, scarce a dozen of which were known to us at the time. Moreover, at the beginning of this century some six-eighths of our people were illiterate, another eighth read with difficulty and read little, while of the educated residue a large proportion must have been endowed by Nature with the imperturbable digestion which is the parent of optimism, and were perfectly assured from day to day, and from year to year, of the impending downfall of the Regicide Atheists.

The state of our own affairs was appalling, yet failed to appall. That the fleet was

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

the wooer escaped; "plague take thicky tinder, t'be damp as grains," she muttered, in no especial haste, as I fancied to throw a light; yet 'twas a kindly girl and the same to whom I owed my first warning, as I saw when she shewed me to my garret and took my directions as to calling me at once if this Mr. Smith should come.

seething with mutiny and the army cankered to the core, that our choice of generals lay between the very bad and the worst possible, the one the cousin of the Minister, the other the son of the King, filled us with no especial concern. We had made a religion of hope, or rather of a pig-headed certainty, for which the facts gave no warrant, and for which, from His Gracious Majesty to his latest recruit, no man of us could have furnished a reason.

To such folk the veritable circumstance made no odds. The Duke of York might deplorably mismanage the Helder affair, what of that? His Royal Highness was a jolly good fellow, a patron of Newmarket, and an all-round sportsman, every jockey and trainer would swear to as much, and for the rest, they'd grant you he had been unlucky, ill-seconded, no more. In war someone must lose, why not he? To round on the man showed an unpatriotic spirit. Up with his Column in the Park then, and damn the Whigs!

*"Bear witness all ye martial bands
O'er whom the princely York bore sway,
To you his wishes were commands,
For you 'twas glory to obey!"*

Heavens! what fools were we! yet doubtless there was work for us to do, and until we had done it we stood impregnable, and still stand.

During those long months of distracted counsels, bloody turmoils, and stupid mismanagement (which Mr. Alison's genius compresses into a chapter) we lived amazingly at our ease. (I, myself, was buying hunters, and indulging in pleasurable anticipation of the sport I loved.) You may take it that among serious people one heard reference to affairs abroad less than once in a day, whilst in such company as this at the *Jack of Newbury* at Bedwyn, the strength of the ale or the staunchness of a horse occupied the whole field of mental vision to the exclusion of other topics.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE MESSENGER

I WAS always a determined sleeper; it is the one bodily exercise in which I excel. Nothing keeps me awake and nothing wakes me. You will say that what follows was the effect of a bad bed or a close room, but I have no more recollection of that room or bed than of some hundreds of others. If the ceiling were low or the mattress lumpy and short I knew nought of these defects but snored until roused by an imperative knocking upon my door and a voice saying,

"Mr. Fanshawe, the horse is waiting!"

I sat up less than half awake, replying that I would be down in three minutes, but none answered nor did the stair creak.

A low half-moon wading in scud peered into the closet giving me light enough to find my clothes. The upper floors were dark and still, but I was awaited; a man at the stair-foot guarding a candle with his hand silently shewed me to a parlour warmed and lit, its table laid for one.

"If I am to ride thus early, I'll break my fast whilst I may," I said, yawning immensely and rubbing lids which fell together if I looked at a light, for I was still mazed with my sudden waking and had no clear sense of what I was about, nor was there any to ask.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

I had bolted some mouthfuls of ham and bread, and had my head in a tankard, when a man summoned me in a stealthy whisper to the half-opened door, "I say there, hurry up, George, all is ready and the house is rousing."

The well-meant familiarity of this from a stranger surprised me a little, but my noddle still hummed with sleep. Reason was in abeyance, and such faculties as were active responded to outside impulses. In a word, I was as near sleep-walking as ever I have known myself.

I clapped my hat on, gripped my whip, the Mandeville crop, and stept out booted and spurred, wiping my mouth with a large silk handkerchief.

The flying moonlight gleamed and faded upon the upper casements, but the well of the yard was dark.

There stood a great horse half-clothed, two grooms at his head, and a small knot of men at a safe distance from his heels, one of whom flashed a dark lanthorn across the face of a watch. "Four sharp!" said he in an undertone; "mount, Fanshawe, no need to scale; I'll certify ye ride overweight. Here's your certificate!" He thrust it into my pocket.

"But — but — " I stammered in utter bewilderment.

"Confound you, George! This comes of last night's lip-trap. Ye lose time, and I warn ye the thing will be crossed in another minute! Bend a leg!"

A man had me by the ankle; the horse swung his quarters, I sprang from habit, and was tost into the saddle.

"Go!" said a voice sharp and low. The grooms at his head leapt back, the cloth slid from his loins; with a mighty plunge he shook his head, spun round twice and neighed as if calling to a stable companion.

"The fat is in the fire now!" laughed a voice in the darkness as the sparks sprang from the sarsen cobbles.

"Who! — where?" I asked in complete bewilderment,

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

feeling for the off stirrup and looking over my shoulder, for it rushed upon me that this was all a blunder.

None answered, for a casement burst open above and someone half asleep, or stale drunk, leaned out lamenting that his boots were full of beer! At the same moment there was a rush of half-dressed men from an entry with shouts of "Pull up, sir!" "Dismount, you there!" "Wrong man!" "Stop thief!" "No start!"

A rocket roared aloft and, breaking, threw a crimson light into the black hollow of that cockpit, echoing now to stamping feet, fisticuffs and curses. And that was the last I was to see of the *Jack of Newbury*, for my horse had found his bearings and felling with his shoulder one who ran at his head (missing the bit but catching the throat-lash which broke in his hand), plunged under the arch.

Into the pitch-black street we came headlong, swinging so sharply to the left as nearly to unseat me, still kicking for that stirrup and with my reins in a tangle. The saddle, too, was new and slippery and not to my shape.

Of all this the masterful beast took full advantage; stretching a yard or more of powerful neck, he drew the reins through my fingers and broke away at a gallop. The clatter of his heels between the shuttered house-fronts was like the file-firing of a company, but next instant was muted, we were upon the tan. The horse half-checked with a startled snort, changed his foot, slid, recovered, crossed his legs and was down, and with a long scramble was up again without loss of impetus.

The fall had thrown me upon his poll, his rising had flung me back into the saddle, where so soon as I was reseated, I set about discovering what was wrong with my reins, both being upon the same side of his neck and coming apparently from the neighbourhood of his knees.

What had happened was plainly to be inferred (for nothing

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

could be seen). In the fall my hands had come forward, the bridle had passed over his head and was now entirely on the near side. The bit was out of his mouth and dangled loose, for that broken throat-lash had let the head-stall slip over his ears! Next moment he must have set a hind-foot upon it, for the straps suddenly tightened across my thigh, were twitched from my grasp and left behind!

The beast was aware of his freedom and, quickening his stride, stretched away into the darkness of an unknown road at a pace that made the wind roar in my ears and my eyes to run water.

I had now leisure to consider my situation, borne at a tearing gallop by a very large and powerful brute over which I had not the smallest control, and fell a-thinking what was like to happen at our first toll-gate, and had gotten small light upon that matter when a green rocket rose ahead, and when I had shot unchallenged through the open pike, another red signal flung my shadow before me upon the road notifying my passage and warning the next gate of my approach.

I was wide awake by this, you will believe. These lights were sufficient to convince me that I was the victim of a most amazing mistake, or, if you prefer it, the innocent perpetrator of an astounding practical joke.

This horse that I was riding was quite evidently the one upon which the wager had been laid! This secretly-engineer'd start, these well-laid arrangements all attested the fact, and once launched upon my course there was no stopping me, who had by a series of mischances lost the power to stop myself!

Those who had planned this match had planned it to win, and it seemed to me mighty hard that the thing should be crossed by a chambermaid's stupidity and a snapped throat-lash!

Why should not I ride it through? The horse knew the road, it was plain; choosing the soundest and softest, with never a

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

falter, and carrying his great head low, he dropt back into a long easy stride which it was luxury to swing to.

Never, save once, had I crossed a beast so massive and elastic, and could I have seen our line I had laughed aloud to think of my ridiculous plight, my unpaid bill at *The Jack*, and masterless servants at *The Bear*.

These, had they and I known it, were at the moment within hail, for at my second gate (which was lighted and guarded, as were the rest) I passed to left of the end of a village street silent in its mist and stinking of tan-yards. It was Hungerford, and I now in Berkshire. But of this at the time I had not an inkling, for the terms, distance, and destination of this mad wager, if I had heard them overnight, had escaped me.

Though reduced from pilot to passenger, I had some natural curiosity as to our course, and scrutinized the stars.

My little mistress had taught me some of the principal constellations, but I had never watched an autumn sky with her at this hour, and made nothing of the twinkling points, now dimmed, now keen again, which played in and out with the moving clouds.

By now we had both warmed to our work, and were upon excellent terms. From between the last houses of Eddington we swung out upon the Great Bath Road, a ten-mile stretch of it, reckoned by the shadowy mile-stones, and for league after league ploughed through a wet blanket of fog whilst snipe cried "skape" from the dark, rushy greens beside the track and skeins of duck dropt into the reed beds homing from their night's banquet among the barley-stubbles. It was a great morass, and so thick was the morning that only the bells of the wagon-teams which we met or passed told us of their presence.

Out of this bank we came at length, still galloping, and over the elms I saw first a greyness and then the dawn, and

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

looking narrowly upon my horse, I knew him! There could be no doubt of it, this was the mighty beast whose staunchness and matchless power of leaping and recovery had saved the Mandeville master stag. Of his identity I made no question. Certain tan-coloured freckles at the roots of his ears were merely confirmatory, for two such horses as he for size, quality and colour are not foaled in a century.

The superb length of that stride I had never forgot. One could balance one's crop on end upon one's palm; it would have been an easy thing to have carried a full glass without spilling, so regular, so rhythmical, was the rise and fall of his pace — a pace without haste or rest — which consumed the road, and whilst appearing deliberate, was putting a mile-stone behind us every five minutes, as my watch assured me.

Since the day broke I had passed a score of tilted stage wagons, broad-wheeled and huge, and three coaches. Most of the passengers were walking to warm their feet. All cheered me, accepting the unbitted horse as one of the conditions of the wager.

As to asking a question of these people, it was impossible; the hurrahs of the outsiders dumbed all speech but their own, whilst the wagoners seemed persons of the slowest wits of any I had met with in my travels, for, after requiring each question to be put to them twice, they bawled "Woa!" to their teams by way of reply and made sign to me to stop, by which time I was got beyond reach of their voices.

A bagman driving a blood-mare in a high-wheeled gig kept pace beside me and conversed very affably and jocularly after the manner of his class, "Mornin', m'lord!" says he, critically surveying the grey, "Dammy, he's a rare bit o' stuff! all whalebone and whipcord! . . . And y'are makin' better time o't than yer ludship did when I had the honour o' pacin' ye a fortni't since." I began to understand. "Aha! he remembers

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

that grass, I thought as much!" My steed had changed from the grit to a stretch of sound turf, and was swinging as softly and silently as a child's rocking-horse.

We had risen a long gentle ascent and saw below us a little town lying about a square belfry, its hundred chimneys sending their blue hearth-smokes all one way across the red roofs. "*Noobra*," said my companion in reply to my lifting eyebrow, adding with a glance at my horse's head, "That's the match, I take it!"

"By no means, he slipt it at starting."

"Then I'll push ahead and get this gate shut and borrow one for ye at the *Pelican*."

"Ye will kindly let well alone," said I, "And I thank ye all the same, but he can go no better than he is going, and I've a fancy to leave him in charge."

The man wheezed genial approval, observing that there was a pair of us. "That's his stable friend he is *ballering* after," said he, when the grey lifted the load off his great heart with a shrill nicker. "Keep an eye for Sam Smith!" he cried after me at our parting, a mile of raw flints reducing him to a walk, but making no odds to me upon the roadside grass.

Newbury we left upon our right. It was now between five and six of a clear morning and along the last of the fen through which the Kennet winds the turf cutters were at work turning or stacking their summer's peat. Far ahead of me through the limpid air of morning I could see their heads bobbing, saw some stop work and run for the road. "Not to greet me, surely," thought I, who was yet hidden from them by hedges. Nor was it for me they had run, for when I came to the place a dozen labourers stood looking stolidly at a heavy fellow in a long blue coat fallen bleeding in a rut. Hearing hoofs he half arose upon an elbow and looked upon me dull-eyed, a look which the yokels worded for him as "Hey, mister!"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Whatever his need it had to be served by others, the grey held on stoutly, swerving wide and quickening as we neared the crowd as a free horse will that fears a detaining hand.

A furlong further on a riderless hackney nibbled the roadside green, his forefeet hopped in his reins.

By my guess we had come twenty miles without for a moment shortening this incomparable stride; now at a slight ascent my steed dropt to a trot and halted, as though at this spot he had been eased before. Down I slipt and stood, resting his back, but with foot in stirrup, you may be sure, and hand on pommel, and was in my seat again at his first movement.

They say Mr. John Wesley wrote his sermons in the saddle; be that as it may, my own experience is that whilst one may think consecutively whilst at a trot, regular and continuous reflection is difficult when galloping; the mind is too alive and nimble, too receptive of impressions to work; the passage of a bird's shadow distracts; it is like trying to add a sum whilst running. There, for instance, when I would be thinking of my little mistress, was a man upon the road ahead of me leading a horse, a man, whom when I approached I found to be the fellow of him who had fallen two miles back, nor had this one been much more fortunate, for he was dusty from a tumble, and by the way his horse lifted his forefeet I presaged broken knees. Him, dizzy from his mishap, I overtook before he was aware of hooves upon the grass. When too late he began to bellow, but so inarticulately that beyond maledictions upon me for not drawing rein I caught little of his desires, and the last that I heard of his wishes was for my eternal discomfiture in company with somebody of the name of Smith: a personality who seemed that day to represent the Father of All Mischief along the Great Bath Road.

Back to my thoughts again, vaguely happy as a boy, playing with my whip, that one this horse had earned in Yorkshire,

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

a four foot crab-stock, glossy and hard, ending in a buck-horn *crome*, as we say in Suffolk, the burr being heavy and its brow-tine straight and sharp.

How this jaunt would end I cared not a jot; I was wholly irresponsible, it was my holiday, and I had worked hard of late and not unsuccessfully. That good old Quaker's forecast had come true. *I had been used*, and the work I had done had, God knows, been very far indeed from what any of the Friends would or could have undertaken. A great estate and an ancient name pulled out of the fire, a rogue unmasked, a brother saved, wedded and settled, and all this due to the wild work of a few hours. *My work?* I laughed outright; I was as innocent of it as of this fool ride and of all that might come of it. *I had been used*; that summed it up; I had been the puppet, a hand had pulled the strings.

Well, all that seemed over, and after all, Blakenham being off my hands, I had my life to live and was minded to live it according to my own plans. Miss Phoebe, now — (God bless her!) — how in heaven's name to extricate her from the sweetbriar maze of her Friendly surroundings? "For" (said I), "George Fanshawe, you are not, and never will be, a Friend; if a footpad jumped out of that hedge you would hit him, sir; which would grieve Miss Phoebe, George; for she *is* a Friend and will never be anything else."

"Well, then," said I, "God mend all!" and remembering, rather late, that I had said no prayer at my rising that morning, I made shift to put my case into His hands who had already carried me through so much, and once upon this line reflected upon the pits of glowing sin He had held me back from, until my past life seemed to me to have been steps picked across some quaking crust seamed by fires beneath.

I had put on my hat again and, glancing ahead, was ware of a saddle-horse close at hand in a lane's end between two

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

hollies (Calcot-Row Bottom was the place). His rider was standing behind him with his head down, as one stands when taking up a girth. Hardly had I seen so much ere we were past, and the man mounting very adroitly, and his horse jumping off into a gallop, came up on my whip-hand with a rush.

I saw what was coming, and awaited the "Stand and deliver," a demand with which it was out of my power to comply.

It is possible my assailant had seen my predicament too late, and, being a person of few words, made no ado, but rapped out a request for my watch and purse from behind a levelled pistol.

All this passed in the twinkling of an eye. Acting sheerly upon instinct, without thought or premeditation, I caught my crop by the whipping of the loop and swung out a stroke at the thief's head.

Bang! went his weapon as I struck, and something took me over the crown like the cut of a thong.

Both horses sprang forward at the shot, for a few strides the grey's courage and reach kept us level, then the lighter and fresher animal drew away.

The thief had dropt pistol and reins, a vizard concealed his face, he swayed heavily in his seat, leaning more and more towards me, fumbling with his hands upon the mane, his knees clipping the saddle weakly. One word he uttered thickly as a man speaks in sleep; "*able*," said he, and over he came, taking the road between the horses heavily.

His left foot, still held by the stirrup, trailed him leaping with each leap of his horse for a couple of strides, when the boot drew, and the grey swinging wide passed the fallen thief untouched where he lay.

The event had occurred with bewildering suddenness — (so had the ruffian planned it). It was the leap of a fox upon a rabbit; calculated, prearranged; a pounce, a snap — but,

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

behold the biter bit, a comicality to make a song about, and which tickled me for the moment to a spasm of laughter; my blind backhander had knocked him out of his saddle, and after such a bumping he would hardly resume the chase.

I was in the highest spirits and quite unconscious of being hurt. That the escape had been of the narrowest I was presently convinced; my whip-stock was broke, either by the blow or the bullet, horn and ferule were gone; my ear sang with the shot, and neck and cheek tingled with powder-grains. And then, without warning, my inwards heaved, the singing in my head became a roaring, a dizziness enmeshed me like a net, and I tasted blood in my mouth (but that was but fancy). To fight these weaknesses was as much as I could manage, nor do I know how long they assailed me, but presently warm blood running over my face and behind my ears brought relief, and the yellow mist before my eyes cleared and there was the grey's head, (carried rather low now), rising and falling to his steady canter, easy and slow, not seven miles an hour by this I should say, for the end was coming.

And then it seemed the road was lined by cheering horsemen, a score of them, and early as was the hour, foot-people were upon gates and rails, every soul of them waving a hat and bawling his best.

The grey and his rider needed it all; slower and still slower he cantered, but canter he did, until at a great posting inn, *The Castle*, where the road begins to fall towards the town below, he drew up beneath a cedar tree, and stood with round red nostrils and shaking tail.

Wearied he might be, but with spirit unquenched he pealed out one of his wild calls, and first among those who ran to his help was a stable-lad carrying a tortoiseshell cat, the dumb friend and none other that my steed had galloped thirty miles to find!

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

A band of well-dressed men was awaiting us, haggard, white-lipped, on tip-toe with anxiety.

As we stopt a storm of cries broke forth. "Begad, he has won!" "Fudge, he has lost!" "Are ye then the referee, sir?" "Well ridden, Fanny!" "He is hurt!" "Bleeding at the nose; 'tis nothing!" "Don't dismount; for heaven's sake keep your seat, sir!" "Where's Copleston? — Now sir, which is it?"

A little person standing amidst taller men, lifted his eye from his watch and amidst the silence of that expectant throng I heard a distant church clock striking.

"Won by ten seconds, if he carried the weight. Where's your certificate? Thanks. You may dismount, Mr. Fanshawe."

I slid down heavily and was almost carried to the scale and my saddle put into my lap.

"A close shave, but an ounce to the good. Whatever made ye ride so fine? And where did ye lose your bridle?"

The tense anxiety of the backers found relief in a chorus of ejaculations of the self-congratulatory cast. A loser gloomed on me with sour intentness as I rose from the scale and removed my hat. "Stop!" he cried with sudden heat. "Hi, here, Copleston, you've not given the race yet. *Don't! This isn't Fanshawe!* I protest!"

For a moment there was silence, disbelief yielding to scrutiny. Uncovered and standing, the fact was evident, and those who a moment earlier had thought themselves winners turned upon me with a volley of angry questions. I looked from side to side ringed by white excited faces all working with incoherent demands.

"Mr. Copleston, if that is your name," I said, "I can answer all these gentlemen in a word. The thing is a blunder from first to last. I came because the horse brought me, and by no will or design of my own. Who owns the animal and what he was backed to do I know no more than Mr. Pitt. He bolted

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

with me from Bedwyn as the clock struck four, cast his bridle, and here I am, George Fanshawe of Chorley, very much at your service; and now for pity's sake a glass of beer."

The place began to go round with me; I was shaking all over, and holding myself together with an effort. This some of them saw, and had me into the house and laid me all along upon a settle, and whilst one sponged my face, another spied the mark of the bullet, and my hat being handed round and its two holes wondered at, excitement ran high.

The room resounded with confident assertion and counter-assertion. The match was landed, was lost, was off, must be re-ridden. The one party having recovered from their surprise were urging that the *horse* had won, their opponents vehemently holding that the *man* had lost. As to the name by which I was pleased to call myself, neither side gave it a thought. That I had stolen the horse was suggested, and the propriety of sending for a constable was met by the alternative suggestion for putting me under the pump! Seldom have I found myself in so false a position, and the faintness hanging heavily upon me, I found it beyond my power to assert myself effectively.

I had husbanded my wits for this inevitable explanation, and you will admit that to be plunged into the midst of it with a broken head was the hardest of luck.

Meanwhile, having said my say, I lay back and let them fight it out, hearing as through a door the disputants wrangling, and the small referee pulled this way and that by over-energetic partizans.

Then a great, cheery laugh, which I knew, rang out, and into the midst of it all bounced Bob Dawnay. "Sorry I missed the finish. So we've won, I hear?" At this Bedlam broke loose afresh, ten men at the least explaining simultaneously to the new comer the merits of their several points of view. He glanced at Copleston. "You are reserving your decision? Let us look

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

at the fellow, anyhow. Why! 'tis Doodles, by the Lord! Bless the man! What has happened?" and the dear old fellow was hanging over me with the greatest solicitude in the world, whilst the room hushed its discords for a moment in presence of his obvious recognition.

In a trice he had assumed command, that was his way; the part fitted him, and tho' he was near the youngest present, all listened when he raised his voice.

Bob was never the man to approach an audience with a deprecatory simper. He went to the point, as he rode at a locked gate, "over" or "through."

"Look here, gentlemen, won or lost, my friend here, Mr. George Fanshawe, is, for the moment, in no condition to do himself justice, or indeed to endure this racket. He has been badly used on the road and needs refreshment and quiet. I will ask you to leave him in my hands for a hour "

The referee lifted his hand, his face clearing. "Certainly, Mr. Dawnay, and your word settles it. Listen, gentlemen, if you please. The race was to be ridden from the *Jack* at Bedwyn to the *Castle* here at Reading, by Mr. George Fanshawe, and I find that a person of that name carrying the weight has covered the distance within the time, and award him the stakes . . . No, sir, your protest is overruled. I have spoken."

Bob's voucher was enough. In one moment I had become again a person of consideration to be courted and propitiated, and was like to have been questioned and flattered to death.

Two hours later I was another man; had bathed and breakfasted, and been refitted from top to toe from Dawnay's valise, and had seen the gallant grey drenched with stout, gruel and beef-tea, a fresh-stript sheep-skin hot from the carcase, laid to his loins, extended at his ease half lost in straw, whilst his own man rubbed his ears, and the tortoiseshell caressed his muzzle.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Bob regarded this scene of contentment with an inscrutable face. From a word he had dropt I gathered there had been near as many guineas laid upon the grey's success as there were hairs upon his body, and that certain persons — his owner amongst them — had wagered sums they could have ill afforded to lose. "Fanny is a fool, Doodles, and between ourselves, has got into the hands of a Corinthian set. If this thing had been crossed or lost, the judge would hardly have held up his head again. I say it. And he wasn't the only pigeon, begad. I was in it, and deep, too deep. It has made me sweat to think on't; for the thing has been a plant, as I can now see and suspected earlier. And look here," he stood away from me, eyeing me strangely. "'Tis the second time, Doodles, you've got me out of a scrape. It shall be the last. I reserved horses, you remember? Well, I throw them in, man. No more of this tomfoolery. So help me, God!"

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

THE MESSAGE

YOU, my young relatives, when children, may have looked, as I have looked when a child, through the eye-slits of a raree-show and watched scene pursue scene across the field of vision faster and faster as the showman (having pouched your pence and impatient to be gone), turned his handle with increasing speed.

With similar bewildering rapidity did the events of this memorable day scamper past, leaping upon one another's backs.

Whilst I was still enjoying my breakfast — (how one eats at two-and-twenty!) — three post-chaises rattled up, and the whole story must be retold afresh to the astonished ears of my fellow-guests of the *Bedwyn Jack*. What I should have been compelled to listen to had I lost may be conjectured; having won, I was pelted with compliments by persons who by their own accounts had spent in my pursuit some of the most miserably anxious hours of their lives.

Here then I made first acquaintance with the gentleman whom I had unwittingly personated, my distant cousin, Mr. George Maskelyne-Fanshawe, who accepted an absurd situation with the better grace since, for reasons apart from the

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

soaking of his boots, he had been in no condition to have ridden.

"'Twas a something put into my nightcap, sir, by one of the gang ye saw; a deed set of scoundrelly Hebrews, bent on crossing the match one way if they couldn't in another. But, 'fore George, sir! never again; trust me, never again!"

I listened to the man with more interest than his conversation merited, as was natural considering that during some twelve hours we had repeatedly passed for one another. I confess I could see no likeness, and was little flattered at being thought to resemble him. At the same time, a similarity which had imposed upon so many must have had some basis, probably consisting more in tricks of manner than in the fashion of features. As to height, I think I had the advantage by an inch, tho' he was the heavier man. When in company no one would have assumed our relationship, and to repeat the opinion expressed at the time, a bad light had much to do with it.

You must all have known cases of the kind; I myself recall two brothers at Eton whose hair and complexion, ages and voices were sufficiently different, yet whom these discrepancies could not save from constant mistakes as to identity upon the parts both of their masters and companions.

My escapade had left me with nothing worse than a plaitered crown and such a headache as a young man may accept in silence and hope to walk off.

Bob was for my company to the Town Hall where the judges were sitting. "They summoned me on the Grand Jury, Doodles, a beastly chouse; it does me out of some excellent shooting, as I told 'em; but these big-wigs have no bowels!"

It was his first appearance upon the panel, and for all his assumption of annoyance he was enjoying the dignity.

"We returned a true bill last night against some Quaker

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

fellow for murder. The man — if they have the right man — is suspected of other matters, seems a sort of criminal Jack-of-all-trades, but the main charge will hang him if they prove it. 'Tis a vastly odd case — a queerer ye never heard; he stands his trial this morning, and I'm curious to see how it goes; (fact, I've a guinea on't.) What say ye, shall we look in ? ”

Whilst crossing the Market-Place my companion was accosted by one who had served with him on the previous day. “Ha, Mr. Dawnay! What, not satisfied with our finding? No more am I, myself; no more is the half of us. We were too precipitate, sir, I'll be sworn. But 'tis too late for the wretch, I fear. You will find our box nigh as full as yesterday. There's a baker's dozen of 'em watching the case, and some money upon it, too.”

“And how is it going, Mr. Merton ? ”

“Why, very ill for the man, sir; very ill indeed. It was even betting, or a shade in his favour, when the case was called, but you may back him to better advantage now, sir, or save your money; for unless the fellow can conquer the prejudices of his friends, Dawkins is sure of a verdict. Friends, indeed! May the Lord deliver me from such!”

“What? Is't possible the obstinate fools won't swear ? ”

“Devil a bit, sir; not even to save life: for it comes to that. There are two in court now, a married couple, plain, honest-looking, respectable folk, whose oaths, if they would take 'em, would go far with any jury; but, would ye believe it, Mr. Dawnay, they are rock, sir, and'll cling to their superstition and'll see their man hang before they'll kiss the book. And what's oddest, neither will he nor his people urge them. I don't dislike the look of the man myself. Apart from his folly, he seems a sober sort, with a double dose of sanctimony thrown in.”

“What is his answer to the charge ? ”

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

"Mistaken identity put simply as a plea of 'Not Guilty,' when, of course, it should be backed with an *alibi*. Three of his workpeople swear to his return upon a certain day; but that won't serve, for the distance might be covered in the time, and he can't, or won't, prove what he was doing meanwhile. So he's a dead man, or as good as. No, there will be no commutation nor reprieve, for ye see, local feeling runs strong — the roads must be made safe. This thing has gone on too long; an example is sorely needed; better hang the wrong man than hang nobody, they say; and perhaps they're right, eh? Ye agree with me?"

Chattering thus, he stood aside to let a blue wagon go creaking past, I saw something within it covered by a rick-sheet.

Bob's acquaintance — a small squire, as I judged — had turned, and was retracing his steps beside us, still full of his subject, and possibly gratified at being seen in Dawnay's company.

"If there's a chance for him it lies in the serjeant's conduct. Dawkins is inflaming the case; he always does; 'tis his way."

"So I've heard," said Bob, "thank God, 'tis not my way. I'm always for plenty of law; never hulloa until the fox has crossed two fences. Now a poor devil on his trial is precious like a fox when he breaks. 'Give the devil his due,' say I, and the poorer the devil why the more the due, eh? If I were in the box Dawkins would set my back up."

"He has set the judge's back up; they were sparring prettily when I left. Well, good day, t'ye, Mr. Dawnay. I'd stay and see it out but I have far to ride, and the roads are none too safe after dark."

The Assize was held in the Town Hall hard by the Market-Place — a mean building, long and low, divided by double curtains at half its length, and temporarily converted to the uses of the two courts. Any arrangement more squalid, makeshift

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

or comfortless, would be hard to devise. The court was as cramped, as gloomy and fully as foetid as a jail.

Dividing the hangings, my friend ushered me into the criminal side, and, edging slowly through the crowd, introduced me to the stuffy pen set apart for the grand jury. It was well filled. The room, at its best, must have been dark, and seemed dismally so to eyes used to the sunshine without. The best lit figure was the Red Judge; the clear-cut marble paleness of his face framed in the massive wig was thrown up against the dark furniture of the bench and canopy. It was Sir Algernon Maskeleyne-Fanshawe. I knew him at the first glance, and need have felt no surprise. The man was in his right place. Had I not heard it said over-night at the *Jack* that he was trying this case? He was listening with an air of weary disapproval to some heated remarks from a stout counsel whose face I could not see.

Dawnay spied a friend. I slipped into the last seat vacant. A grand jurymen, whispering behind his hand, apprised me of the turn things were taking.

"Evidence for prosecution finished; Dawkins up, spoiling a strong case by — listen to that, now!"

The serjeant's full, big, unmodulated voice was unpleasantly aggressive; his attitude, bent forward across his papers, with hands conjoined beneath his gown behind, suggested a gamecock setting to his adversary.

"I repeat, m'lud — "

"What you have not proved, my learned brother; pray get on with your case."

"— the pigheadedness of pragmatistical antinomians — "

"To whom are you referring?"

"To the people called Quakers."

"The sect is not upon its trial, brother Dawkins, nor have we evidence of what ye allege."

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

"But, common fame, m'lud — "

"Is not evidence, nor is common defamation."

A subdued titter rippled over the audience. The big counsel glared to right and left of him ere he resumed.

"M'lud, I submit that I am entitled to place my own interpretation of the evidence before the jury without dictation from the bench!"

("The old fool! — There! Fanshawe is going to let him have it!" muttered a voice at my ear.)

"The court, my learned brother —" began the judge in a little far-away, weary voice, very low and clear, "the court allows you every latitude in dealing with the facts, but has drawn, and will continue to draw, the line at impertinent *obiter dicta* unwarranted by the evidence and unworthy of the high traditions of the bar."

"Well done, Sir Algernon!" murmured someone near me, "the serjeant has met his match at last!"

"*'Impertinent,'* my lud? *'Obiter dicta,'* m'lud? I appeal to your ludship! I appeal to my brethren of the circuit! To what depths have the liberties of counsel sunk if we are to be hampered in the conduct of a case for the Crown, publicly checked and censured for a casual allusion to the notorious poltroonery, the insensate bigotry of disloyal sectaries?"

"Have a care, my learned brother; I am not one whom it is safe to defy."

The big counsel wagging a purple jowl boomed some hot rejoinder. The judge bent upon him a face of cold displeasure.

"Sit down, sir. You have disregarded my expressed wishes. You have set at nought my ruling, you have now gone beyond bounds. I decline to hear more from you."

The man he addressed, one of the leaders of the circuit, whose powerful personality had long been a terror to witnesses, who had dominated the bar, and was accustomed to overbear

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

the bench itself, drew himself up with a gesture of astonishment, and tossing his brief to his junior bounced from the court snorting his protest.

"Mr. Temperley, you are with brother Dawkins; is this your case?" The question fell from the judge in quiet, matter-of-fact accents. Men smiled.

The junior hurriedly pleaded for an adjournment, which the court refusing, he collected his papers and followed his leader.

There was a minute's silence during which one heard the muffled tones of the Black Judge beyond the curtains charging.

Sir Algernon hemmed with the clear low note of a harp, "Gentlemen of the jury, the circumstances, if something unusual, are not, as I venture to think, unfavourable to the administration of justice. And I wish to impress upon all who hear my voice, that justice, and not a verdict for the Crown, is what we are met to seek. Counsel for the prosecution having thrown up their briefs, a certain rude equality is gained by the case, since the accused, being charged with murder, is debarred the assistance of counsel."

(This was news to me and seemed monstrous unfair, but was the law then and for long after.)

"The disability under which, I say, the accused lies is sufficiently heavy, but in this instance is immeasurably aggravated by his inability to put into the box two witnesses by whose mouths he had hoped to establish his *alibi*.

These persons, who, we are told, are ready to testify that the presence of the accused elsewhere at the instant of the crime made his participation in that crime a physical impossibility, are Quakers, whose religious convictions forbid them to take an oath, and whose testimony is therefore legally inadmissible."

The judge paused; it was an artifice to rivet attention.

"You, gentlemen, must have been fortunate in your experi-

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

ence of courts of law if you have failed to notice the shameful levity with which the oath is too commonly taken.

"In the course of this case two witnesses for the Crown, the brothers Proctor" — (I pricked my ears) — "have deposed circumstantially to petty details of time and place respecting a casual meeting a twelve-month ago, a meeting after dark (if these persons are to be believed) — particulars, which must have seemed at the moment wholly unimportant; and when, as you probably observed, the testimony of the postmaster was found discrepant from that of the constable, the witness promptly changed his story and swore with equal pertinacity to his amended version.

"I mention this point, gentlemen, out of place (for I must task your patience by reverting to it in my charge), to shew you how little weight the oath, *per se*, should have with you, the oath apart from the character of the witness.

"But here we have two persons whose sense of what is due to the majesty of God is such that they refuse to take His awful name upon their lips even to save the life of their friend.

"They *say* (we are informed), the accused was their guest from the thirtieth of September to the tenth of October; that he spent ten days and nights in their company nursing a sick man, and was never absent for more than an hour. I repeat that they *say* this, and from my personal experience of Quakers I affirm publicly and without hesitation that I believe them.

"I do not believe that these persons would travel two hundred miles to tell a deliberate lie and yet shrink from backing it with an oath.

"The unsubstantiated aspersions upon this sect which pained our ears I stigmatize as unjust and untrue. They were not charged in the opening nor supported by a tittle of evidence; they form no part of the case they were imported to prejudice. I not only withdraw them from your consideration but put to

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

you the direct opposite. The loyalty of the Quakers has never yet been compromised or impugned; their goodwill to the Throne is generally recognized. But apart from this, the morals of the sect will bear comparison with those of any body of persons in Britain.

"I speak what I know. My relations with the Quakers — with the Society of Friends, as they prefer to be called — having been intimate and wholly to my advantage, and I will not hear them wantonly defamed. I have ever found them scrupulously truthful, and I doubt not that your experience bears out mine, and that you also know them for a people whose bare word we should all receive *outside* this court, but whose bare word *inside* this court the law compels us to ignore."

The great man paused, watching, as it seemed to me, the effect of his remarks upon the jury.

It was my first experience of oratory. I could have listened to him for an hour without fatigue, the sweet precision of his balanced periods so took me. No doubt it was the voice, he was famed for his voice, but each word seemed to fall patly just where it should.

Presently, as satisfied with the result, he turned to someone whom I could not see and made a sign.

I had by this grown interested in what was going forward, but found myself (as a late comer was likely enough to do) extremely ill-placed for the show. Seated low at the back of the box I saw little beyond the wigs of those in front of me and nothing of the well of the court.

"Where is the dock?" I asked in a whisper, and found it was near upon my right hand, but so arranged that until the accused rose (he was sitting) the occupant was invisible to me.

"What's the fellow's name?" said I behind my hand. "*Hall-word*," replied my neighbour in a gruff whisper "the judge's

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

partiality won't save him; 'tis a matter of identity, and they swear to his mug, sir; swear to it hard and fast."

I recalled no talk of any Quaker family of the name. The dates were landmarks in my life; it was impossible to forget where I lay on the dates mentioned.

An official, whom I took to be the Clerk of Arraignment, was upon his feet addressing someone.

Then a plank creaked, and every face turned towards a man who was rising.

"*My lord!*" The accents thrilled me to the pit of my stomach. I knew the face; I knew the voice; they were the face and voice of Abel Ellwood.

"But — but — I know that man! What has he to do with it?" I whispered hurriedly into the ear of my unknown neighbour. He half-turned, and looked me over askance as well as our proximity and the gloom of the box permitted. "I am sorry to hear ye say so, sir. That is the prisoner."

The prisoner! Abel Ellwood charged with murder! The situation was too absurd for words; it needed a huge blast of laughter to express my feelings; an inclination which grew upon me suddenly to the verge of mastery, taxing to the uttermost my self-control. Was I crazy? Had that bullet cracked my thick skull in very truth?

Meanwhile, my wits resettling, the opening passages of the defence reached my ears. The man was absolutely himself, paler, perhaps, but as dryly composed in his self-command as though engaged upon his daily business. What he had passed through, what he was feeling, those who knew his heart might guess, but the outer mask of him was strangely impassive.

"Do I understand I have thy leave to speak?" He addressed the judge, and awaited the consenting sign. "Then, first let me thank thee for thy last words; those as to the Society of Friends. Whatever may be the issue of this case, and I know

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

that my life is in higher hands than thine, or those of the jury, thy plain and righteous expressions will be remembered. They cannot fail to bear fruit. I thank thee." He paused. "For myself," he resumed, "I am not careful to dress my case with artifice. I will not heap together words where the evidence I offer is refused a hearing. The two witnesses for the Crown who have sworn to my presence at Maidenhead Thicket on the evening of October 5th are mistaken; honestly mistaken. Neither Colonel Gunn" (I started) "nor Thomas Doggett had I seen before the day of my committal. That they were passengers by the coach that was stopped is probably true, but 'twas not I that robbed them. Nor until I passed the place in custody on my journey hither was I ever nearer to the scene of the crime than London.

"My witnesses, those whose testimonies have been received, have spoken to my leaving Milton-on-Derwent on the afternoon of September 30th, and to my return on the afternoon of October 10th. The two witnesses whose testimonies are refused, my friends Heber and Susanna Moorhouse, can speak to my reaching their door on the evening of the former date and my leaving ten days later.

"I was their guest during those days and nights. My horse stood in their stable. They and I were tied closely by a sick man whom we were nursing. It was a time of almost constant rain. No one came in to us that they or I can remember; certainly no one came upstairs. Nor did I, at least, have occasion to go further than to my horse's stall. No — " he paused and reflected, "there is no one in York whom I could call in evidence of my presence there. I have friends and acquaintances in the city, customers too, but their knowledge that I was detained there for those ten days was gained, I find, from hearsay; they know it now, and they knew it indeed shortly after my leaving, but they did not know it at the time.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

"I am told such knowledge is not evidence.

"It is strange, knowing my own innocence as I know it, as my family and my friends know it, to be baffled thus."

The speaker made a longer pause. The Red Judge, closely watching, leaned a little forward. "I must not cross-examine you. Believe me, I interpose for your help; you have spoken of a fourth person, a sick man, whose malady detained you within doors during the days in question. Is he still living? Is he also a member of your Society? Is his evidence unavailable?"

"My lord, he is not one of us — he is not a Friend. His evidence is vital to me, and would be conclusive. But he is travelling. I am told a *subpoena* has followed him from one address to another for weeks. But all trace of his present whereabouts is lost." He stopt. "If it be the will of the Almighty, I must submit to His ordering." Again his voice ceased. The court watched and waited.

My younger relatives will hardly need to be told that I am far from a ready man. Various incidents in these memoirs will have shewn this infirmity; and, indeed, men of my inches are seldom instant or quick-witted

For some moments it had been growing upon me that it was I that was wanted, and this comprehension had set me upon needles and pins to learn the right person to apprise of my presence.

To raise my voice in that concourse, I, who had never so much as opened my lips in public — the thought turned me hot. That I must speak, and speak at once, I felt; but whom should I address, how begin? I declare my tongue grew dry in my mouth, and the palms of my hands pricked with sweat.

Should I speak from my seat or rise? Should I begin with "My lord," or "Your worship," or plain "Sir Algernon"? To bounce into the midst like a jack-pudding at a fair with his

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"Here we are again!" seemed indecorous. Presently there would surely be an opening.

And now, after a pause, Abel was speaking again, and when he spoke it was in a changed voice, and in tones that pierced my heart.

"Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" — (might find him!) 'Behold, I go forward, but he is not there' — 'and backward, but I cannot perceive him!' — 'he hideth himself from me!'"

His voice, monotonous but clear, had fallen, and fallen until men strained their ears; now he flung his head back with a gesture unusual to him, seeming to remember himself and to desperately rally his faith.

"'But *He* knoweth the way that I take! When *He* hath tried me I shall come forth as gold.' But — "(his tone fell again); "but I have prayed. If he were here — if he — my friend were here — " for the first time the voice shook, his eyes closed tightly, his chin sunk upon his breast; "if — if my friend George Fanshawe were here!"

"*But I AM here!*"

They say my shout stopped the business in the civil court and was heard across the Market-Place. I sprang to my feet, my eyes stung with tears, and, wholly forgetting what few manners I had ever learned, made straight for my friend across the packed grand-jury box, ploughing through cramped knees, and trampling hats and toes in ruthless sort, aye, and if Bob is to be believed, swearing under my breath, but of that I have no recollection, having clean forgotten what I did say, and trusting the recording angel has forgotten it also.

¹ Job xxiii. v. 2, 8. I doubt if ten men in court knew whom he quoted, or that he did quote. I myself did not, nor, I think, did you, sir, before your reading of this note. — G. F.

² Job xxiii. v. 10.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

The end of the box and the dock were contiguous, divided by a barrier and rail. As I reached this, they tell me, with blazing face and outstretched hands, Abel, who had turned, suddenly whitened, swayed, and ere the turnkey beside him could interpose, fell across the partition upon my breast in a dead faint.

What I should have done I know not, nor have ever heard the proper routine, or form of legal procedure ordered for such an occasion. The hot, crowded court uttered, they tell me, a queer painful sound, and thereafter dropt upon a silence and a wondering what next. But of this I knew nothing; all I wanted was to get to my friend, and after that to find someone to fight. In a word, I was in that congestion of the emotions from which a woman finds relief in weeping, and a man in harsh laughter and muscular action. I would have given a handsome sum for ten minutes outside with a fellow of my own size into whom I might thump a little Christian charity. This judge-and-jury business was too maddeningly stupid when it came to putting Abel (think of it! *Abel!*) on trial for murder!

Holding the slight, small body thus on my shoulder, I drove an elbow into the paunch of a fat court cryer, who seemed over busy, or with too little to do, and bade him fetch a mug of water.

"Sir, who are you?" (it was the judge).

"George Fanshawe, sir — my lord, I would say — George Fanshawe of Chorley, at your service."

"How come ye here, sir? or rather, why have ye not appeared to your *subpoena* at the proper time?"

"Was never served, Sir Algernon — knew nothing of all this until ten minutes ago. But wait a bit, and I'll tell ye all about it. Now, where the dickens is that water?" for Abel was coming round, tearing himself to pieces with long, hacking sobs, the hard, terrible giving way of a stern, well-controlled man; there can be few tortures worse: it shakes a fellow up for days after.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"There, there, old fellow, cheer up! Dammy, we'll lick 'em yet! I'm here! lookye, I'm here!" (Bob declares I used such terms as these, and, what was most wonderful, the judge sate stone pale and uttered no single word of rebuke, whilst men in court gript one another's hands and blew noses.)

From my new position my view was of the best; wherever my eye fell I recognized some remembered face. There was my good old colonel's pippin cheek, puckered with delight; there, too, were Parson Sinclair and my Lord Mandeville, ready with testimony to Abel's character, had the verdict gone against him — (no fear o' that now, thank God!) And there was the prisoner's father, with both hands in the hands of Isaac Pennington, and his face was rapt and wonderful, as of a saint that has reached heaven straight from the stake.

"George, this will never do. Put me down."

Abel had regained himself with a wrench and a dead lift. He stood up close-lipped and tottery, more ashamed of his weakness than most men are of sin.

"You may leave him sir," said the judge, and bade him be seated. "Now, Mr. Fanshawe, do we understand you to offer evidence for the defence?"

"By y' ludship's leave I beg to submit the case for the defence is closed. Your ludship will see — "

This was little Temperley, the junior counsel for the Crown. Sir Algernon turned upon him so swiftly that the bar expected a second scene, but was disappointed.

"Must I remind you, once more, my learned brother, that I sit here to administer justice, and hold it no part of my duty to help counsel to snatch a verdict upon a punctilio? Here is a witness, possibly the most material witness of all, arrives an hour late, and, for a wonder, unsummoned; strolls into my court as a sightseer, by chance, if I take him correctly. Our fathers would have called his appearance the act of God.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Let that be; to close his lips would be the act of the devil, sir; and I'll be no party to it. For the matter of that, Mr. Temperley, what do *you* here? for the court understood you to throw up your brief in a tiff."

"Oh, my lud — "

"Well, Mr. Temperley, 'tis your first case in my court, as I think, but you may as well understand that I am not to be played with, and will put up with the whims and vapours of neither leader nor junior. Whilst counsel hold their briefs, and speak to them, I'm bound to hear them, but once thrown up I am not."

Mr. Temperley humbly submitted that he had merely followed his chief to use his good offices, and Sir Algernon, now mollified, readmitted him to his position in the case.

"You shall cross-examine the man when he has given his evidence. Let him be sworn. Now, Mr. Fanshawe!"

I told my story, the judge listening with silent intentness, rarely making a note.

"And you make oath that between the dates you have given us the accused was your companion and nurse, by day and by night, with brief intermissions?"

"I do, my lord. He held my hand for hours at a time. He fed me. But for him I think I must have lost my reason, if not my life."

Mr. Temperley rose, hitching back his gown, and posturing with hands on hips. It was a great occasion for a junior.

"What was the nature of your illness?"

"Fever," I replied.

"Brain-fever?"

"No."

"How brought on?"

"By over-work, and lying out in the wet."

He regarded me quizzically, rubbing the side of his nose.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"O-verwork and — the rest of it! What do ye mean, sir?"

"Well, sleeping rough, then."

"Sleep-ing *rough*? Do you wish the jury to believe that ye had no roof over you, or settled abode at the time?"

"I had none at that time."

"And that ye slept anywhere? beneath a hedge, for instance?"

"Why, seldom so rough as that; 'twas lying in an open shed did for me."

He flashed a look of intelligence at the jury.

"You are an eccentric, Mr. Fanshawe?"

"'Tis the first time I've been told so."

"No fixed abode! You slept in open sheds! For how long did this gypsified fancy possess you, sir?"

"Possibly three months."

"And were you travelling and lodging alone or in company?"
(with an insinuating droop in the voice).

"I was with a party of Irish."

There was a murmur and a sensation in court.¹ The counsel, after a calculated pause to allow my surprising admissions to produce their full effect, resumed:

"And what was the Honourable George Fanshawe doing whilst travelling the country for three months and sleeping rough — ('sleeping rough' is your term) — in the company of a party of — Irish?"

"Harvesting."

A ripple of merriment passed over the court. The man's drift had been obvious, and his hopes of identifying me with some Whiteboy or Jacobin agent were plainly dashed.

One bubble pricked he blew another. Nodding confidently

¹The Hon. George Fanshawe was accustomed to say that it was impossible for us to realise the hatred, distrust and contempt with which the Irish were regarded at this time. The horrid barbarities (used by both sides) of the Rising were still going on, and the minds of Englishmen were daily inflamed against their unfortunate fellow-subjects by exaggerated accounts of events of which the bare truth was sufficiently sickening. — EXORS.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

to the jury (a rather lumpish set, to my thinking), as if to say, "Wait, I'll unmask him yet!" he began again with affected deference, having perused a note handed up to him from his solicitor.

"You are, as I think, a person of landed estate, Mr. Fanshawe?"

"I am."

"Kindly mention your chief properties."

I did so, and had him out of his depth from the first word.

"And of great wealth — vast wealth — may I take it?"

"Why, possibly; I am a man of means."

"And what explanation do ye offer of your extraordinary doings, your eccentricities, sir, for your 'sleeping rough' and 'lying wet' for months on end, and — for consorting with rebel Irishmen?"

"I did not say they were rebels."

"Do not fence, sir! ye know they were rebels! Why did a person of your birth and position associate with these miscreants?"

"My lord," said I, "I am here to tell the truth and the whole truth, but not to have colourable statements put into my mouth. I did not, I never have abetted rebels, or countenanced rebellion. I was just a harvestman at the time, one of a gang, earning my daily bread because I had outrun my allowance."

Sir Algernon nodded. Temperley was at me again like a gamecock.

"But, ye have just sworn to the possession of landed estates, Mr. Fanshawe, half-a-dozen at least, and to wealth, 'vast wealth,' Mr. Fanshawe (that is your name, I may take it?). Thank you. Well, how is a jury of plain men to reconcile your statements? Abject poverty in the company of a gang of dirty Irish, snoring o' nights beneath a hedge" (he would have that hedge!), "and 'vast wealth' and as many landed

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

estates as ye have fingers on your hand! Come now! The jury await your explanation, sir!"

"I have come into my property since. A year ago I was as poor as a rook."

"'As poor as a rook!' and to-day as rich as a dook?" (he got his laugh). "And in affluent circumstances you retain your passion for travel?"

"I am fond of moving about."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"At Great Bedwyn."

"Thirty miles, I think, and not yet noon! You travel fast! Did you post?"

"I rode."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"That is great work for one horse, sir?"

I nodded.

"And that fever affected your head — your brain, you say?"

"It upset me."

"It affected your brain, sir, yes or no?"

"No."

"Will you swear you were never beside yourself?"

"I do."

"Nor ever deranged? Nor in bedlam? Nor in a mad-house? Nor in a strait-waistcoat? Nor under restraint?"

"Never in my life!" I laughed outright.

"You laugh, sir! but this may prove no laughing matter for you. *Who are you, sir?*"

"George Fanshawe; the Honourable George Augustus Frederick Chorley Fanshawe, second son of the late Earl of Blakenham and Bramford."

"Do you swear to *that*? Now, have a care, sir! the punishment of personation — of perjury, is severe!"

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

"I am — the person — I claim to be."

He turned his back upon me with a gesture of contemptuous incredulity, and I thought his manner in some way told with the jury. It behoved me to stop this, and I was cheered to observe my good colonel making signs to me. So there was a man (and a Crown witness) who would swear I was no adventurer. But I held more than one trump. Again I made appeal to the judge, keenly watchful as ever.

"My lord, it seems my identity is challenged. I am lucky in seeing two gentlemen in court who know me. Colonel Gunn, there, and the Honourable Robert Dawnay, who is of the grand jury, can swear to me."

"That is so," said Bob rising, "he is George Fanshawe, right enough."

The colonel was upon his feet, we caught but one word, "*pairfeckly*," for Temperley was too wise to put in the credentials of a witness he aimed at discrediting. So the second bubble was burst.

He now got away upon a fresh scent.

"From your account of yourself you seem to have been last year a young gentleman of very ill-regulated life. You will admit as much?" I would not.

"And pray how do you fix the day, the month even, on which ye fell down with this fever, this brain-fever of yours, at York?"

"'Twas the first day of the autumn assizes; but I can get nearer than that, for hearing the Minster strike midnight as I lay a-bed I asked the date and was told 'twas the first of October."

"By the accused?"

I assented.

"And what other reason have ye than his bare word? Had ye an almanack? Or did ye keep a calendar? Or write up a diary, Mr. Fanshawe?"

"Further on, in the street, but not far from the day
to begin with the first trial. I saw the man start from Whim-
per's shop, with the criminal, and that business, as I know,
was at the end of the street."

The barrister's face was immovable, but his eye twinkled
and he said, "not quite my point."

"Now, your friend, these trivialities, which, whether real
or imaginary, were wholly immaterial, and may very well be
supposed of your brain-fever, what evidence can ye give the
jury that you were — in — York — at — the time?"

I pondered.

"Come now, Mr. Fanshawe, upon your own showing, ye
have recently borne two very discrepant characters. The
Honourable George Fanshawe of Chorley," he bowed, "is a
personage whose goings and comings are known, and noted, and
remembered. But Fanshawe the tramping labourer, the compan-
ion of 'League, and Paddy, and Shamus beneath a hedge, here
to-day and gone to-morrow, keeping no diary and light-headed
with a fever, is a very different person, and may have imagined
events which did not occur."

"Now, sir, can you point to one reputable person who can
testify upon oath that he saw you in York between the dates
in question? One person? — but one, now?"

For a couple of breaths I was wholly taken aback and saw
no way to satisfy him. Was I to fail after all? Did the judge
doubt me? I turned to the bench and saw my answer in a
flash.

"Why, yes, sir, I can; and that person also, by the greatest
of luck in the world, is in this room. I refer you to Sir Algernon
himself."

"To — his — lordship?"

"Just to his lordship; none other." And again that move-
ment swept the benches all one way like wind among the wheat.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

"My lord!" said I, turning to the red-robed figure beneath the canopy, "may I recall to ye the evening of the last day of September a year ago? A very thick, wet fog it was in York; so thick that there were no carriages about, for the horses would not face it. Will your lordship carry your mind back to an engagement you had for that night, a dinner (the Lord Mayor's feast, as I think it must have been, by the lights at the Mansion House), and how you had to get thither afoot between two linkmen from your lodging in Lendal? Am I not right?"

"You are right so far," replied the judge; "I remember that fog."

"Then, my lord, you will surely remember finding a man lying upon the steps of your lodging — a man who had just tript and fallen over the horse-block, and upon whom you a most stumbled as you left your door — "

I paused; all fear, all sense of stage-fright was passed; I was leaning towards the judge, having forgot his great dignity, and addressing him just as man to man, and was now reading his face, that marble face of his, and springing with hope at the dawning of recognition which I found in his eyes.

But he sate there like a stone sphynx and said nothing.

"My lord, you addressed that man sharply as he rose — sharply, I say, for you were surprised at his nearness and at his being there at all. But your next word was in pity for his want. You offered relief and — you were rebuffed. O, my lord! do ye not remember? Think, Sir Algernon! so much hangs upon it; a life, an innocent life, no less. *I was that man ! ! !*"

The silence in court was of that strained sort that falls when a crowded room holds its breath and awaits the word.

"I do remember you. Mr. Temperley, this is the witness of truth."

The room breathed again; I heard the sound.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

The zealous little counsel spread his hands abroad with the gesture of despair. "When the bench itself tenders evidence I can but bow," he said, and bent his bewigged head to the inevitable. "My lud, I will labour this cross-examination no further. The astonishing Mr. Fanshawe, who has sprung himself in this unexampled fashion upon the case for the Crown, is *al-together* beyond me!"

And now, what shall I say? which way shall I turn? If this were a stage-play, it should end here. One of my young relatives, more deep in such matters than I, assures me that this scene is a natural "curtain" and would "bring down the house." Another, a lady this, an eager devourer of the fictions of the "Great Unknown,"¹ would have me wind up the story of my early life at this point, and, as she puts it, take a pull at Pegasus; let him cool down, and start him upon another day.

It is but fair to these young advisers of mine to say that they are at present in ignorance of the sequel.

For this was neither stage-play nor story-book, nor could we, the actors, make our bows to a huzzaing pit and slip off by the wings to supper and bed. This day, surely one of the great days of my life, and wondrous enough as it stood, was yet but half-spent. *Anti-climax* indeed — (my young niece's word, this) — the pendulum had swung me from the Bedwyn *Jack* to Reading Court House, from the serenity of ignorant security to the foot of the gibbet, and was still swinging, from the cheers of Reading Market-Place to what? I was to know before night and all too soon.

In the meantime there was indeed some sort of anti-climax — (my niece's word again, a new one to me) — for Sir Algernon must charge the jury, and these must consider and deliver their

¹Now known to be the imaginative Mr. Walter Scott. — G. F. (*Now* the world-famous Sir Walter. — EXORS.)

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

verdict, a foregone conclusion about which nobody bothered his head overmuch, and these details are dim in my memory; for at the moment I was oppressed by a sense of the unreality of it all, the too-pat opportuneness of the way in which things had fallen out. This unknown town with its crowd of well-known faces, whence, and at whose call, had they sprung upon me? My head ached heartily. I came forth from the gloomy stuffiness of that Court House a very much amazed man. The sense of coincidence persisted for hours. It struck me as like the last scene in some ill-writ comedy wherein all the cast is brought upon the stage in a forced contiguity.

Yet, save in one particular, there was nothing to justify surprise. Everything, as you will have seen already, was strictly in sequence to the circumstances of the case. The felony having been committed at Maidenhead Thicket, which is in Berkshire, the accused must stand his trial at the county town, Reading; and the witnesses, both for the Crown and for the defence, must be there too. Sir Algernon, as the judge riding the Oxford Circuit, was upon the Bench as a matter of course, supported by the grand jury of the county, of which Bob Dawnay was one, for his property lay at Wokingham, not seven miles away.

Regarded thus, the marvel became no marvel at all, each man of the many being where he was by reason of his duty, or of his sympathy, or upon compulsion (needs must where a *subpoena* drives). It was my own appearance, so explicable to myself, that was the miracle.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

fell upon the circle of bowed heads. Three — five — seven minutes followed of deep, breathing pause, an awaiting the right word, an expectancy of the angel's descent that should move the brimming waters of our spirits.

Mandeville's red face of wonder dwells in my memory still. Sinclair understood the matter, and when Isaac Penington knelt (with the deliberation and unction of a bishop) he and we all arose.

After a second pause my dear old master essayed to render his thanks to his Maker, and I doubt not his meaning was read above and the intention accepted. To us, standing mute and breathless, in a kind of painful happiness, such words as forced their way were near unintelligible unless interpreted by the occasion.

One felt them as one feels the burden of a voluncary.

D'ye ask what did these two good men say? Why, if I could bring myself to attempt to give the words — and I hold it a sort of petty treason to my friends and *lèse majesté* to my God to report the terms of their interview — I profess I should fail. The broken sentences, the eloquent pauses, the tremulous hand, the fluttering, strained eyelid, all pleaded, and were heard, and are recorded — elsewhere.

That was prayer.

As his father rose, Abel lifted his face and moved around the table to where I stood. His first step was deliberate, as if taken in a meeting-house, but it was with a rush that he reached me, caught me by both arms above the elbows, and so stood. I felt the unconscious potency of his grasp, looking down upon the blanched, working face and tortured lips to which words could not come.

So we stood in such an embarrassing intimacy, both as near to the breaking-down as needs be, until "*My friend!*" said he, and never another syllable.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Then I knew that this man loved me for myself, and not merely (as I had fancied) as his trophy, as one loves the creature one has saved or spent one's self upon.

And with that the meeting "broke up," as Friends say, and conversation became general, and there was my appearance upon the scene to be explained, whence I had come, and how, to eyes that hung upon every word with unwinking attention and widened with sober wonder.

"Then thou didst not know of our trouble until — ? "

"Until Abel rose in court."

"And wast brought to this town to-day — ? "

"By a run-away horse. He pulled up at his stable. They told me 'twas Reading. I suppose it is, eh ? — I was never here before. So you see 'twas no doing of mine. I disclaim it, sir. I was — used."

"Yes; thou hast been used!" said Isaac Penington with luminous eyes that seemed to know so much more of me than I knew of myself.

"Father," said Abel regaining his old dry manner, "these friends will be hungry, thou wilt be hungry, and I am hungry" (with his first smile); "let me see what the people of the house have for us. Friend Mandeville, thou wilt join us ?"

The direct simplicity of the invitation took the earl aback. For a nobleman to break bread with a Quaker miller would be a thing unheard of, albeit he had travelled two hundred miles to uphold that man's character. Besides, though the Ellwoods should pass, being my lord's neighbours and illumined by the occasion, there were this quaint old fellow Penington, and those pishop-keeping Moorhouses to be digested; I say Mandeville was visibly nonplussed, flushing a hotter red than his jolly cheeks usually wore.

Parson Sinclair watched him with twinkling humour. "No, no, Mandeville! there are no covers laid for us at the *Broad*

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Face, and you are as sharp-set as I and the rest of us. Come, man! Yes, Mr. Abel, yes! and many thanks for your hospitality."

"Why, assuredly, if we shan't be in your way," blurted my lord, with a grateful glance at his friend. "I thought 'twas a kind of family party, ye see, and feared to intrude. Heigh!" cried he later when the great jug of nut-brown ale had gone round and a cold sirloin made way for a peck of scarlet crayfish heaped upon a pewter charger, "Heigh! 'tis a feast for a king! Let us pity Sir Algernon! I picture him nibbling French kickshaws with the High Sheriff, hot sherry and cold soup, and never dreaming of such dainties as ours. Say, Ellwood, couldn't we stock Derwent with these creatures? They are mighty delicate eating."

But his hosts' thoughts were elsewhere. "Ah! father," said Abel, "if mother could know — mother and Phoebe!"

"Aye, lad, thou and I could well afford to spare them a portion of our happiness; they must bear their suspense for how many hours yet? Our letter should catch the night mail north out of London, eh?"

Mandeville's jolly face wreathed itself with smiles. "By your leave, Ellwood, I have seen to that," says he, and rolling in his seat, lugs out his watch. "Why, yes, as I reckon, my second horseman will be nearing High Wycombe by this, riding post he should get to Hertford before dark —"

"And out-pace the mail? Friend Mandeville, this is like thy kind heart!" cried the father, whilst Abel's face shone.

"Not at all, my dear sirs, I can't swallow the compliment — don't deserve it, God knows. Many's the time I've had my news of a fight brought me so half the length of England — spent a mort o' money on my fancies, so why not for once, eh? O they shall know the news betimes, trust little Renshaw: he will bump the leather as long as he can see, snore all night in a

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

chaise, and ride again to-morrow. Your ladies shall hear on't within the twenty-four hours, or I'll trounce the boy for his idleness with my own hand!"

We all laughed at my lord's heartiness, even the Moorhouses.

"The bells shall sound them the news if they are out walking," said Sinclair; "my new bells, I wrote peremptorily: a full peal, a grandsire peal, of triple-bob-majors, is my order, and the new ashlar must stand it the best way it can! Ah, you Quakers! must we teach you how to rejoice? It shall run to a tar-barrel and a sheep roasted whole, when I get home."

"Nay, let us call it a fat ox, at once, and at my expense!" said I; "and I'd knock in the head of a cask of October, if I thought Abel would let me."

But my friend's hand upon my shoulder meant denial. "The poor fellows will get enough of that, George, without aid of thine."

"A good offer declined, begad! But 'tis the man's day, and we must just let him have his way, Fanshawe," laughed my lord. "What beats me," he ran on inconsequently, "is the way things cogged in. There was a second master stag to be saved by hard riding" — he lifted his tankard and bowed to Abel — "and but one man of all mankind would serve his turn, and but one horse of all horseflesh to cover the road; and here, at the very nick, the man and the horse get together and bring the match off! I say it beats me."

He looked around the table with gravity. "Sir, Mr. Abel," he went on, big with an unusual thought, "I tell ye I would have you at my side if ever my back is to the wall, for plainly there is that about ye — how shall I say? If ye were another sort of man we'd call it the devil's own luck — nay, I don't mean *that*! But, it seems — ha! now I have it! When you are at your farthest there's another steps in and takes the matter up, eh?" Again he glanced round nodding.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

“ ‘This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes,’ ”
said Isaac Penington.

“Why, yes sir, you have hit it,” assented my lord, “And
who may have said that ? — Scripture, is it ? Ha, then there’s no
more to be said.”

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

WHAT LAY UNDER THE SHEET

“GEORGE, thou art looking pale; is the room too hot?” asked my old master, whom nothing escaped, “Did thy horse fall? The plaister seems fresh.”

“Just a passing interview by the way, sir”; I reached down my hat and shewed the bullet holes, “A rough salute from a gentleman of the road. Yes, it has left me with a trifling headache, no more.” (But they would hear it all again.) “I protest ye would make me vain if I didn’t know how far from a hero I behaved: ’twas ‘Hand over!’ and ‘bang!’ went he, and ‘whack!’ went I, both together; and the pair of us knocked half silly, I upon my horse’s neck and he out of the saddle, bump upon the road. All done in a trice!”

They sucked in their breaths with the same sound, every pair of eyes at the table rounding with wonder.

Said the parson who sate upon my right, “This was close shooting; there is powder-rash upon your ear, sir.”

“You struck him?” asked Mandeville.

“A pretty smart crack,” said I, “for it broke my whipstock — yours once, my lord.” He nodded.

“Was the poor man hurt, doost think?” asked Mrs. Moorhouse, a solicitude at which we three gentiles forbore to smile.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

oner, a brisk, irascible lawyer, who interrupted everyone and did all the talking.

Abel standing close behind me had made a sudden movement at the sight of the letter I had produced, but had said nothing. This I remembered later.

"I thank ye, Mr. What's-ye-r-name, that's all I want of ye. Your letter was upon the deceased. We happened to hear of you being in the town. The jury will now view the body."

I turned to go, but Abel, his arm locked in mine, did not move and fixed me to the spot. He was looking more ill than ever I had known him, but plainly meant to see all that was to be seen and desired my company.

The sheet, a soiled and darned affair, showing a smear of blood, was turned back, exposing the corpse from the waist upwards. The afternoon sunshine slanted in and fell pitilessly upon the trestle showing in all its bareness the thing that lay there.

What I saw was the naked body of a young man of maybe my own age, or somewhat older, small, compact and muscular, the tanned face, neck and hands contrasting strongly with the corpse-whiteness of the trunk. The body lay upon its back with no sign of violence visible at the first sight, and without marks except a design in blue, such as sailors use, worked upon the left fore-arm, a foul anchor between two hearts with the initials E. B. S.

I had seen enough without seeing the face, and wondered at Abel's interest. The arm that held mine began to shake: still holding me, he moved forward with those who were passing around the head of the trestle in turn. The coroner was speaking in crisp, matter-of-fact tones.

"That is the only wound; the right temple; see? This is the whip-handle (crop is perhaps the better term), which was fixed in the wound when the body was found (you heard the

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

evidence). The surgeon removed it. The tine lacerated the brain. Death, judging from the set of the features, must have been practically instantaneous.

"How this thing came there we have no evidence. It may well have been an accident — result of a fall — his own whip — er — Certainly, sir, — but ye shouldn't have interrupted me." This was to Mandeville who had entered behind us unperceived, and had signified a desire to examine the thing. The coroner recognized my lord's quality in some manner, and curbing his impatience, paused in his summary. Mandeville held the horn between thumb and finger for a moment. Returning it to the clerk with a bow, he stepped back bestowing upon me a look which I did not understand.

Moving up in our turn Abel and I had reached the head of the trestle. The face was unknown to me, though dauntingly familiar. Where had I seen it before, or whom did it resemble? The cropt black head was dusty from the highway, the features smirched, but not disfigured; the eyes half-open. I felt no desire to look twice, and, but for Abel's grasp, would have stepped out of the rank. He was poring intently, his rigid white face close above that waxen mask of death. This morbid behaviour was unlike my friend. I glanced aside; there on the clerk's table lay — my whip-handle!

There was no possibility of mistake; the silver collar or ferule shewed its chasing, an earl's coronet and a black-letter **Q**, battered and worn down, but, if one knew what was there one saw what was there. Mandeville's glance was explained.

Would Abel recognize it? He had often handled the thing and knew its story. He looked. I felt the pause, the quiver of recognition in the arm still fast in my own. And then that clasp loosened, he straightened himself, released me, and passed on. We left the place together as the jury returned a verdict of "Found Dead."

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Mandeville awaited me under the tavern archway. Abel went within-doors alone, walking slowly as a man in a day-dream. My lord watched him go with a sidelong glance of concern.

"Our man is somewhat upset; nerve all a-jangle, and nothing wonderful in that."

But there was another whose hands were shaking and who took a turn up the yard alone. I felt my lord's eyes between my shoulder-blades as I went, and encountered them at my turning; he had something to say, and I must let him say it. He had used me well. My mind was in tumult, or rather, the two minds of me were at odds, this exulting, that condemning, and behind both some calmer voice re-stating the bald, accidental fact.

My lord just then was of the earth, earthy, and saw nothing but the feat.

We had an old head-keeper at Bramford, who, in his youth, had served a Tollemache of Helmingham, and there, whilst on night duty in the park, had killed a deer-stealer at the cudgels; himself going scarred for the rest of his days, as I remember. Well, that old, bloody tussle had set a seal of distinction upon the man for life in the eyes of his fellow yokels. We men are made so; some of us: Mandeville for one. He looked me up and down with a new respect in his regard.

"Gad! Fanshawe, y've an arm!" (fingering the muscle, whistling softly). "And I'd have sworn my old crab-stock would have borne any usage! A back-hander, ye were telling us? . . . So? — 'twas the very hell of a swipe, then, and the rogue's nob exactly within distance. Ye came well out on't, by the Lord, yes! How he missed ye at arm's length beats me, for y'are no cock-sparrow. Depend on't, ye ducked as ye struck, or the thing threw high; yet a man of his profession should have known his weapon. He was reputed a master with the pistols." I stared. He ran on. "There is no doubt ye saved your own

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

life and his, too," jerking his thumb towards the door Abel had entered.

"I have to thank you, my lord, for your silence," said I.

He laughed. "Well, I judged ye would have it so, 'least said soonest mended.' Some of these gentry hunt in couples, and the survivor has been known to bear a grudge. You take me? I presume you will waive the guineas?" He smiled dryly.

"Eh, what?" My face was enough.

"Man, *that* was Sam Smith. Oh, the coroner didn't smoke it. A busy fool; if he had had half an inkling he would have made a fine potholer, adjourned the inquest and kept you and me kicking our heels here for a couple of days maybe — magnified his office, as his sort delights to do upon occasion."

"But — *Sam Smith*? Are you sure?"

"Cocksure. Fills the bill to a hair. We in the East Riding had good cause to study his points last year; aye, learned to look askew at every little dark fellow, and got, some of us — these Proctors did — to suspecting and laying informations against an innocent neighbour who looked the part. In fact we made it so hot for this rogue that he changed his country and — met his match!

"How's your head? What say you to a turn? The beauties of the place — if it has any? You will? Come along, then. We'll give our friends the slip for an hour or two. 'Tis a kindness all round. Sinclair can stand it — 'tis his profession; but — for myself, now — a little o' that goes a long way."

He made an amusing grimace like the big school boy he was.

"Not that I'd have 'em otherwise — like myself or you, now — God forbid! I prefer 'em so, and would go far to uphold 'em; but — well — I've a weak stomach for religion, and that's a fact. I take it we shall live the longer, man. Mr. Abel there is almost too good for this world — and ye have seen that it takes a sort of miracle to keep him in it."

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

So rambling on he treated me to his philosophy, something to my amusement and more to his own, for I am considered a good listener, as is natural to a man with much to learn and nothing to teach.

My lord was suffering from an over-secretion of energy, and was for working it off in my company. Being both strangers to the place and indifferent where we went in such pleasant weather, we saw some miles of cobbled streets, tiled gable-ends, quaint middle-rows, and tiny shops, but no building of mark.

They do say that Reading once owned as fine an abbey church as any in England, a royal foundation, planned by the master-builder of his time. They say, too, that what the wars left of this treasure was picked to bits by the townsfolk for building stone.

My comrade was killing time whilst his horses rested. The life of the back-streets diverted him for an hour, the shop-door gossips, the disputatious neighbours: —

“Birth, ma’am? ’e ain’t never had none, bein’ not christened; ’cos why?” the reason followed, provoking a rejoinder that filled door-ways and windows with observant heads, hopeful of a climax. “’Tis a snake in sheep’s wool ye are, ma’am,” etc.

Each worker or drone of this sun-warmed hive lived its own life. The other end of the town might watch the scales of justice, tingle with anxieties as to an issue involving honourable life or shameful death; here, within hail of it all, we squabbled, kept shop incuriously.

Mandeville kept the middle of the street (as we English do abroad), regarding the house-fronts askance as one glances at a nest when the bird is on. The habits of the lower orders moved his wonder.

“How do these people live? Ah, I forgot, you have tried it. Queer experiences; must hear you tell ’em. I say, Sinclair

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

and I start early to-morrow; join us — we've room — and help me with the pheasants; say yes, man!"

But I was thinking out my next move, nor needed to reply, for a knot of open-mouthed listeners outside a brewery tap blocked the narrow street and diverted my lord's attention. A man of the easiest temper and solicitous only to know all that might be going, he forbore to push by, lending a tolerant ear to the humours of the show.

A burly fellow in a long blue riding-coat was holding forth to a circle of cronies. He had something of the air of a popular hero in low life, and from the shine and redness of his battered, hard-weather visage, had been kindly entreated by his admirers.

" — Thatcham, 'iss, 'twas at Thatcham us two got wind o'm. Seen 'm nigh-hand the old school-house this side (arly this mornin' 'twas, mind that). Did us see his mug? Now, what d'ye take the man for? No! Sam knows a thing or two, and niver gi's us a smell o' the sight o's phiz 'till his vizard was on. Lord! how 'e rid, did Sam, so soon as us hallered! Bill in there" (the speaker jerked a thumb in the direction of a shuttered room across the street) "clapt in the persuaders and gets up nigh enough to 'm for to make ready to fire; but Sam 'e gets his shot in first, and down goes pore Bill lump on the 'igh-road. I ups and tries a long shot and feels pretty sure I marked um. Then us both sets down for to ride, ding-dong, hell-for-leather. Ah! yah! we made the pace a cracker, I tell ye, right from Thatcham village to Woolhampton *Angel*. Once past that and just afore the turn down to Aldermaston, thinks I, 'Us be near enough to try agin,' but Sam, he comes to the same inclusion, for he turns in his saddle and puts a ball into my mare's off-knee, and down *we* come and off goes Sam. But, damn his eyes, I'll nab him yet and touch them guineas; you see!"

It seemed to me that this paladin and his fellow within-doors

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

must be the couple of catchpolls whom I had passed dismounted upon the road that morning.

Somewhere at the back of a church with a stumpy spire we decided to turn. It was a narrow lane of the staidest respectability. "This will do," said Mandeville, taking an alley paved with bricks at the side of a dull-looking building, apparently untenanted, behind which the passage opened upon a little close or grass-plot overhung by limetrees and shut in by crumbling walls crested with spikes of wild mignonette and draped with ivy-leaved toadflax, plants my little mistress had taught me.

The place wore an air of gentle neglect, neither garden nor wilderness. The uncut grass was tall and white, its seed long shed, the yellowing leaves whispered over it, and bees went about their business among the sunflowers under the wall.

Where had we got to? Trespassing, plainly. From behind a yew came a man with a spade. Wading irresolutely through the high grass as if looking for something lost, he presently found a spot to his liking, spat upon his hands and broke the turf.

At the sound a head looked over the wall. "What, Chawley, another on 'em?"

"Noa, sir, I hear tell 'tis a furriner; an' blame short notice, fur 'tis wanted fur to-morrow, think o' that! Now I puts it to ye, who'd chuse fur to be a sexton? Folkses be that thoughtless!"

Retracing our steps, we learned from a lad that this was the Quakers' burying-ground.

"By the Lord, we might have known it!" cried Mandeville; "'tis as snug a bed for tired limbs as you shall find in a week's riding. Think, man, of all the sober, gentle, wise old bodies laid away here this hundred year, and never a parson — (so Sinclair tells me) — to pray over 'em or promise 'em a joyful resurrection. It sounds heathenish, yet after what we've seen to-day, dammy if I wouldn't as lief take my chance in that little

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

green garden as in the best consecrated bit of ground in Yorkshire, aye, in Beverley Minster. What say you?"

"'Quakers' grave-yard,'" said I, "it spells the heart of quiet. Yes, yes — green grass and whispering leaves sprung from — well! They've lived their simple, orderly lives — five generations of them or so — as separate from the folk around 'em in speech and dress as so many foreigners, and have kept their severance in death, for here they come at the last with as few sins on 'em as so many school-girls."

"Don't ye believe it, man," cries my lord; "half of them were men — *men*, sir, aye, and the other half were women. Now wherever there are two lads and a lass there's the raw stuff of a tragedy, and where there are two lasses and a lad there's a comedy afoot, whether the dresser has togged the cast as Puritans or the other sort."

I shook my head. "I know them. There are men lying there who never struck a blow in all their lives, or swore an oath, no, nor their fathers before them."

He smiled upon me with tolerant incredulity. We got back to the Market-Place.

The *Catbarine Wheel* was in a state of subdued excitement. Beneath the arch a little knot of neighbours conferred with the woman of the house, holding their aprons before their mouths, an action which signifies mitigated grief, or respect for the dead, in the lower class.

"To go and claim it — the corpse of a puffie stranger — well, I never did!"

"What I sez meself; but there! It saves the parish, ma'am, that's somethink. So, 'e comes to me for a room, does Mr. Ellwood, but I couldn't. 'You can 'ave the lock-up coach-house for the night, sir,' sez I, 'but I can *not* have it into the 'ouse for *no* money!'"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

do right?" . . . But — but it is too terrible," his faith flickered. "All I have feared has befallen. The worst, the very worst!"

"But, sir," I urged, "he might — he might have been taken and — and hanged —"

"And saved at the last, 'though as by fire,' but now —"

I had spoken in haste and warmly, to mitigate if I might the poignancy of their grief, and perhaps, too, to keep myself from thinking of my own. I was fighting this off with blind hands like a sinking man who knows it is all in vain, and when silence fell my heartache grew almost insupportable. The remembrance of the words I had been conning as I came up the stairs, the phrase I had decided to open the matter with, near overcame me. I could have gone forth into the corridor and cursed my luck like any trooper.

From this descent and black selfishness I was saved by the sight of my friends' imperious anguish. I understood it all. The ravelled skein I had touched once and again lay distinct; the black thread twined and knotted within I followed to its fracture.

What remained for me to say? There was nothing I could say. On their parts, both these sorely-tried men refrained from word or sign which might wound. That such would have been harsh, unjust, unchristian, goes for nought. Are the good always fair, kind, and well-balanced when in the grip of extremity? My friends were, yet was there one thing which it seemed they could not do. Nor could I.

As we stood, the narrow space between us might have been covered in a stride. It was not to be passed; it was a chasm such as I have heard tell of in mountain lands, across which men may exchange looks and even words, but touch hands — never.

I know not if the thought were in their hearts that was in mine. The hand that had spilt the life of the son and twin brother could never again rest in theirs.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

The hour was a bad one for me. Across that chasm, widening fast, I seemed to see the sorrowing face of my little mistress, never to be mine, growing fainter and more distant, and to hear her "O George, dear George! how could thee do it?" I knew I had lost her forever, and could never say to her father the word I had come to say.

The chasm widened, was growing beneath my eyes: the bottom of things seemed a-falling out (as had happened once before in my life); I shook at the prospect.

Abel's face there, so near and yet so inaccessible, awoke in me a kind of blind resentment. There was this silent, wooden fellow, this clock-work automaton driven by a spring called duty, who never — so far as I could see — gave a passing look to a pretty girl, or entertained a naughty thought; there was he, I say, wrung with real downright grief for a vicious rascal who had stolen his clothes, abused his good name, personated him a hundred times, put him within reach of the hangman!

That the rascal was his brother went for little (in my mind); they had hardly met since their school-days, and held not a thought or a wish in common. Their stand-point as boys might have been the same and broad enough, but that poor dead thief's malpractices and way of life had been breaking that basis away for years past, it had dwindled to a very pin-point; compared to it my community with Blakenham, say, was mile-broad, yet we had found that all too narrow a base for friendship. Why, as I live, until I had been able to do my lord a service and so found out his better parts, I swear I'd have learned of his death with a casual "God bless me!" Yet we had never fallen out beyond bounds, and were reckoned fairly good-hearted fellows in our way.

It beat me, it beats me still. These were twins, you'll say, and there's no more to be said about it.

Our eyes met and met again, but though upon the edge of

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

speech he did not speak. So stands some poor girl before the man who has betrayed her, drawn to him by half her nature, repelling him with half. A word would have turned the balance, but I had no word to say. Bewildered by this unexpected blow and full of pity for all concerned, myself included, I bowed my head and made for the door.

"Don't go like this; we don't part here, George," said my master. "Thou finds us in bitter distress, but through no fault of thine. An inch more or less, the veriest accident, nay, but for God's finger thou wouldst have lain dead on the road, and Abel been left for execution. It is the will of the Almighty, inscrutable, terrible," his mind fell back again shuddering and lacerated from contact with the iron fact.

He rallied after a pause. The world would go on; he had his duties to perform; courtesy demanded something from him though a son lay dead below.

"But thou hadst something to tell us."

Now it was I that was at fault; but a minute before I had come picking my steps upstairs as brimful of warm hopes and honest love as any young fellow in the three kingdoms, and now, my God! the thing was done with, not to be thought of.

There were few farewells; some hard hand-grips; so you see things were not so bad as I had feared, I had not utterly lost touch with these men; father and son, they would come again in time, to a point, if never quite to the old unreserved freedom. Well, it should be my part to strive for that later.

I got myself from that room and felt my way down the stair in the mood for any mischief. Sick with playing shuttle to the webs of others, tossed back and forth without resting-place or prospect, I was minded to take things into my own hands and see a little life.

Moodily pacing a narrow row on my way to the *Castle* or elsewhere, for in truth I was ready for anything or any company

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

that would save me from my own, I encountered old Penington.

"My friend, where art thou going?" says he, with the plain directness which gets to the heart of a matter better than finesse.

"To the devil!" I rapped. He turned and walked beside me in silence, I also silent. Under such escort I was like to come to little harm, and smiling sourly to think of the figure I must be cutting, reached my inn without another word.

Under the cedar that stands before it my companion stopt and offered me his hand. "I have no light upon thy path, my friend, but of this I am well assured, that He who hath used thee hath still a use for thee. Farewell."

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

THE CUP RUNS OVER

FOR a wounded spirit there is no anodyne like work. To sit with empty hands, to brood upon my luck with gloomy self-pity, would have been — the devil. This, by the mercy of God, I had the sense to see, and having seen, the determination to act upon.

That winter I hunted, not immoderately, as I thought at the time; yet a doubt assails me since that I rode like a man whom the fiend is riding. Years after, they tell me, I lived in the memory of the Riccol and Wardby Hunt as “that mad Fanshawe.”

Rigorously limiting myself to three days’ sport a week, the other three working days were spent in overseeing my estates. It was a case for the master’s eye. Mine was pained; I found everywhere a need for leadership; a brutal scramble for the good things of life, and a resolute kicking away of the ladder by which success had risen.

I will not pretend that at the time I should have put it thus; my untrained eye saw only that all was wrong, but discerned neither cause nor remedy.

Here were thousands of acres on which no owner had resided for forty years: estates (all mine) lying cheek by jowl where the whims of quarrelling bailiffs were law. Up to

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

this fence the fox was sacred, beyond he ventured at his peril whilst on this other manor the head of game impoverished my tenants yet brought me no return. I had found man-traps specially designed to break the shin-bones of my labourers; shards of glass laid down in my trout streams; spring-guns in my coverts; and these devilries (as my newly-opened eyes discovered them to be) planned wholly for the sport or privy gains of some jack-in-office.

My lands were farmed with an eye to the beasts, but what of my men? My guides had stared the surly disapproval they durst not express, when I had poked my head into my wretched hovels. It would seem that to look kindly at a labouring man was impolitic, to address him civilly was like to turn his head, whilst to ask if his roof leaked or his chimney drew smacked of Jacobinism and a setting of class against class.

"They must be kep' down, squire, damn 'em! once ye lats they get *sassy* and 'tis all up wi' you and me." Such was the advice tendered me by one of my oldest tenants, a red-nosed true-blue in top-boots, his flowered waistcoat covering a paunch like Toby Philpot's on a brown jug.

I had visited a dozen parishes of mine where for half a century no dissenter had been allowed to hold land; where Methodists worshipped in a sourly-tolerated privacy, their ministers having sat in the stocks as rogues and vagabonds for preaching on the village green.

Thus was I put to thinking for others, whilst for myself I chanced upon sly doings, a fall of summer-cut oak, unauthorized by Biddulph, for which, but for my discovery of the fraud, no account would have been rendered.

"A man I must have — a man, not a lawyer in London, but a head, a hand, and, above all else, a heart; and all three upon the spot," said I at last; "and just such a man do I know, but — will Abel come?"

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

My great uncle's movements during the six years succeeding the events set down in the last paragraph are not certainly known. He kept no diaries, and materials for a connected narrative do not exist. He seems to have travelled much, chiefly within the limits of the British Isles, the Continent being difficult of access at the time and inhospitable to our countrymen.

Two visits to Sweden be certainly paid, and several to the extreme north of Scotland.

The following fragment of memoir covers a part of the autumn of 1805.

The introductory sheets of the first portion have been lost; it begins disconnectedly.

. . . outridden my servant, who had posted from Hull with my valises.

The weather being a St. Martin's summer, cool and delicate, I have seldom enjoyed travelling more than on this occasion.

Twenty miles short of my destination I must pass through Norton Coldridge. It was market-day, and the business being as good as over, the pitched sacks were being removed from the cross by lean and ragged carters, and the cattle sorted by drovers as hungry and hopeless.

I had some recollection of holding property in the place, and supposing the *Chorley Arms* to be one of my houses, stayed to bait and refresh myself.

"The house is very full, sir," said the landlord, regarding me with some concern. "We have no private room available to-day. The 'House o' Commons' is roughish for your worship's quality, but there's the 'House of Lords' upstairs if ye don't mind a little liquor and smoke. May we lay for ye there?"

The room was large if somewhat low in the ceiling, and I too old a traveller to be put from my victuals by tobacco or uncongenial company.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

At the round table near the hearth a party of six were sitting over their wine, men of a stamp that was new to me, a class farther removed from ours than from the smock-frocked boors bickering over their spirits and pipes in the room beneath. These would be the new gentlemen farmers, I supposed. There might have been a small squire among them whose father had never reckoned himself ought but a yeoman or signed save with a cross.

These persons sprawled in unconventional postures very much at their ease, hand in fob and with vest largely unbuttoned, whiffing in a surly silence or all speaking together more and more loudly, enforcing their remarks with gestures of the clenched fist. Yet it was plain they were not quarrelling; these were the manners of men supreme upon their own lands and wholly unused to contradiction.

Their fine clothes seemed hardly to fit the wearers. The untended condition of their hands was perceptible even from where I sat. They hawked and spat with the rustical freedom of men accustomed from youth to brick floors.

Said one: "There were talk o' peace at the covert-side yesterday. Squire seemed to make out the French was getting sick on't." This view was scouted loudly by the company at large. To talk — merely to talk of such an anti-climax — showed an unpatriotic spirit.

"'Twas a flam, neighbour Ball. Squire was making a fool on ye. Peace! what wants we wi' peace? *War*, sir; a good war! Come, now, I give ye a toast: 'A bloody war and a bad harvest!'"

The sentiment was drunk with enthusiasm, with such vigour indeed as to rouse a sleeping toper who raised a purple face from the table to inform the room that he had heard "as Boney had crossed the Alps — crossed 'em in an open boat"; "but," added the creature with conviction, "'tis a lie, my boys, and I

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

for one will ne'er believe it: a shall never land in old Cheshire, not while wheat's at ninety."

The talk turned to men and wages, which latter were by way of being fixed by the county bench. Said a fat man in buckskin breeches and tasselled Hessian boots, thumping the board until the brass buttons on the cuff of his blue cutaway clinked again: "We'll set it at six shilluns, I tells ye, and six shilluns it shall be, by God!"

His hearers received this ultimatum with phlegmatic composure and meditative whiffing. Remarked the soberest, "Wheat's at ninety-five. At your price, Squire, that'll run to three shillings a week to each fambly out o' the rates."

"Likely 't do, but that don't affec' me; mine's a close parish." replied the stout dictator, taking his wine off with a relish.

Another voice resumed: "Ellwood says seven's too low; he's for nine shillings."

"Damn Ellwood!" snorted the autocrat.

"Aye, aye, hot words ne'er filled a bushel. Can ye afford to snap yer fingers at him?"

"And why not; tell me that?"

"Because he'll start that canal-dock of his if ye do, and draw off every lab'r in' man for ten mile round —"

"And keep the beggars for us thro' the winter? He's wel-come!"

"Aye, and thro' haysel and harvest, too. Why, man, there's three years' work on that job when once 'tis started. Will ye like that? Not ye, I think!"

"Damn him, again says I," retorted the other. "Will young Fanshawe never come home to 'tend to 's affairs? Is this blasted

¹A parish in which there were no poor rates, its landowner having pulled down every cottage, and drawing his supply of labour from neighboring parishes, upon which the burden of supporting his men would fall when their employer discharged them at the approach of winter.—ED.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Quaker to ruin the county, spile the men, p'ison the children wi' book-larnin' and such-like culch, and us, the backbone of the country, sit helpless?"

"'Atween you and me, Squire, young Fanshawe might side with his steward if he did come home. He's got the pick of our men for years past, and has no kind o' trouble to keep 'em on the estates —"

"No, by God! they're fussed and humoured and messed about; housed as well as my hunters. You never see such cottages! His tenants dursn't lay a stick acrost e'er a one o' their chaps. 'Tis monstrous! Is we Englishmen? I ask meself. The grand jury did ought to make a presentment about it."

"Well, they won't do no such thing, you'll see. For one thing, the judge 'd ask the Clerk of the Peace for the Petty Sessions returns, and we all know there be no trouble o' that side o' the county. So now, Squire, what say ye to nine shillings for the winter wage and peace with Ellwood?"

The last stage or so of my journey would have supplied balm to my self-esteem could I with honesty have taken credit for the changed aspect of the country-side which met the eye on either hand.

Instead of sunken capes of thatch, rotten and black where they were not hidden by moss and singreen, my cottages were everywhere well roofed.

The season being so advanced, their gardens had little to show, yet their emptiness seemed due less to neglect than to husbandry; the winter cabbage stood tall around the new styes:

Winteringhame had changed little tho' it was three years since I had set eyes on it; what are three years to those hale patriarchs the chase oaks? Nor was the ranger's lodge altered a whit: Abel was still single and found the house sufficient for his needs.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

He was afield but expected. A man took my horse. I entered at the back, and passing through the darkening passages, found the parlour he used and sat to await him.

The stone-barred window opened to the west, a low sun spun pale gold among the leafless boughs, sending an arch of primrose-tinted light aloft to die into the blue that darkened at the zenith. The upper half of that room was still light; I saw upon the walls certain antlered heads, spoils of my gun and rifle, sent south for mounting in years before. The lower half was dusk, yet not so dusk but that I could see the table littered with a woman's matters, a basket of tapes and needles, hanks of wool, and the like. In the seat of an easy chair lay a little book of household accounts; even in that light the script and figures were familiar. A stocking half hid it, a stocking frayed at the heel through which peeped the white of the delf nest-egg a woman puts within a garment she is darning: the gleam of it caught my eye. On looking around me I found more woman's gear, this and that, but still my eye returned to that little stocking. It was no man's wear; the selvedge was worked with initials in a red silken cross-stitch — *bers*! My heart leapt, a wave of delight surged through me whether I would or no. Abel's housekeeper was my little mistress; I should see her again. (We had met but five times in the six years.)

This was not alone more than I had bargained for, but was flatly against all judgement and resolution. It was not to have been, and could lead to nought but a reviving the old hopeless longings packed away and locked in long ago.

Perhaps after all I was mistaken; to make sure I looked more closely at the stitching, touched, lifted that little stocking, held it to a better light (I had no right to have laid finger on't) — in a moment it was at my lips!

"Abel, thou foolish fellow, what are thee meddling with my work for?"

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Turning in guilty confusion, I got to my feet; I had been seated with face to the window.

In the open doorway stood my little mistress, bright against the darkness of the passage behind her, the last of the sunset touching her hair with gold and delighting to dwell upon the faint rose of her cheek as the light of evening does in all that is ruddy in nature. Her eyes were dancing with glee, her lips and throat pulsing with a soft laugh that died as I turned.

"O, who is it? *George!* dear *George!* thee here! How thou startled me! To think — "

"I am truly sorry. You have had my letter? I marked it 'post-haste.'"

"No, where? — when didst thou land? we thought thee in Sweden."

Our words came with a rush, faster and faster: nor whilst speaking had we kept our distance, but were both moving around the table as we spoke and met midway with outstretched hands.

How it befell I know not, I swear I did not foresee it by the fraction of a second, or forecast it in any wise, but, moving so, into the dark end of the room, from the broad orange light thrown by that mullioned window, we lost our distance, our hands missed touch, it was our arms that met, and in one moment she was in my embrace! And rested there: not for longer than one soft, slow breath, but long enough for us both to know that if the contact were an accident, the resting in contact was the keenest of pleasures.

"*George!* what is this? O, what have I done? It cannot be, thou knows, it must not be!"

Alas! I knew why, or thought I knew.

We tore — as it seemed — ourselves apart: I still silent, dumbled by a tumult of emotions: love for my little mistress,

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

pity for her, scorn of myself, my selfish weakness that had now spoilt her life. I stood with hanging head.

"Dear George, forget my folly!" (She took the whole blame to herself.) "Mother will understand." (She dreamed not for a moment of suppression.)

"Let us tell your mother, then, and have it over. Is she at The Edge, or here?"

"They are at Quarterly Meeting; they return to The Edge to-morrow. About this time to-morrow; we must wait till then. O — !"

Her low voice had a depth of soft pity in it. Silence fell between us, the first embarrassed silence that either could remember, broken presently by her.

"George, do not blame me too much."

"You? — myself!" I said, hoarsely.

"Well, neither of us then, so hardly. This was to be. It is no new thing, as I can see now. It is like — like that jar of Abel's stuff he puts crystals into — little by little, and they all dissolve, no one would suspect it was not all liquid, then just a tap, a shake, and it finds itself, and in a moment the thing is solid. We were taken unawares. Now we know, — what we know. We must be strong, George; thou wilt be strong, and help me to be strong, for O — "

"Phoebe, can't it be? Why can't it just be?" I whispered, the strength of my resolve going every moment, for now I was sure of what I had guessed at one of our previous meetings — her ignorance of how her brother came by his end.

I could see her wet eyes shine in the dusk, her lips moved silently; at last the word came.

"Because we are not of one mind, George. I do not judge thee. Do thy duty as thou sees it, only be sure it is thy duty."

Yes, she was stronger than I. That she referred to my rooted desire to be soldiering, I knew. The desire, still baulked as it

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

had been those seven years and more, lay heavily upon me: I had made no secret of it to the Ellwoods; that they disapproved went without saying; it was a matter never referred to.

I waved the objection aside.

"What has this to do with it? You are *you*, I am *I*: we have known one another so long — so long! Don't you see? There is no one else for you, I think," her eyes were as clear as water. "There has never been, and never will be, any other for me, Phoebe. We were made for each other, Phoebe; it should be — it must be!"

I caught her hand; it lay passive in mine.

"No, George, dear George; for so thou art to me, and will ever be, tho' I must call thee so no longer after to-day — save in my prayers — no, we must be wise and brave. This is — is —"

She shook, she wavered, I felt her tremble, yet, falling back upon some inner source of strength, she raised her head and faced me again.

"George, this thou art asking is not everything; there are ways of life — *Everything*? Indeed no; the married life is very wonderful, and must be sweet when the husband and wife see eye to eye. Anything short of that is the saddest of mistakes; even so it is often denied to the best of us. There are duties as high, or higher; indeed it is all a matter of duty, of what *is* one's duty, and that will be made clear, is clear already for me. No, I am not for thee, George; do not urge me, do not overbear my weakness until it breaks, and I live to despise myself and thou to despise me."

This was using love to defeat itself. I opened my lips, but moving swiftly to me (we had fallen apart), she laid soft small palms that shook upon my shoulders, looking up into my face with a piteous firmness.

"Yes, thou cares for me, I know it now; and as for me, thou

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

hast seen my spirit too; but O, George, do not, do not abuse thy knowledge! There are others fitter for thee."

I shook my head; that plea was absurd whilst those wet eyes were so close to mine, whilst that sweet breath warm from her parted lips played over my face.

"Yes, fitter," she persisted; "fitter than I could ever be for that life, but for my work here there is none. I am sister and wife and all to Abel — he will never take a mate — not right hand indeed, but perhaps left hand to his right, or little finger George, to his grasp, just completing the hold. We work with one mind and will. He is so wonderful! And it begins to tell. Thou dost not know, I could shew thee. The men love him at last — the best' of them — they were sorely suspicious for years; they would not help themselves, or save. It was all drink — drink, every penny went so. They seemed unable to believe that we meant well by them, or that if we did that Abel's stewardship would last.

"But most have come round now. The gardens are getting beautiful and the homes cleaner, and the darling little mites better fed — "

"But why should this stop? I am not such a brute — "

"O, it would, I know it would," she hurried on, "See, all my time is his now. Mother released me. Dear mother is almost strong again, and with father out of business — for The Edge is play after the mill and those long journeys — he and she are always together and I am here. And truly my hands are full from morning to night. I could tell thee — there are the classes I take myself, and others we oversee; schools to visit. Some days I am driving all day, George. No, do not take me from my work, Abel's work; he plans everything; this is my place, a place where God has put me, and has trained me for. Indeed I am happy in it, and should be good for nothing elsewhere."

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

What lover ever yet was moved by such a plea? The strong human impulse welled up within me; after all I was a man, she just a woman and lawful prize. She should be mine. I would win her, trusting to nature and to two warm hearts for the rest.

Her hands had slipped from my shoulders, they were fluttering upon my breast, one on either side, pushing me from her, forcing us apart, utterly unconscious of herself. The action and attitude touched a chord of memory, a chord still vibrant; just so had her brother stood years before restraining me from the dark waters, death and hell.

I could have taken her by storm, caught her wrists, her waist, pressed her to my heart, silenced the pleadings of her lips with mine. It was in me to do it; one side of me throbbing urged the experiment. "A bold plunge, she is yours! up manhood!" But she and hers had not so trained me. The other side hung back, holding in leash the ignobler self; I stood convinced against all promptings of sense of the way in which it was ordained for me to walk, the grimly happy path of renunciation.

She felt herself victor — it was now grown too dark for her to read my face — her hands fell, she stepped back with a stifled sob, secure that her appeal had won the verdict — for that time at least.

The door closed behind her, upon my little mistress, a very woman. Our first love-scene, hers or mine — was over; she had left me, and the word "love" had not crossed our lips.

An explanation was due to my dear old master. The following afternoon found me at his side in The Edge garden, pacing slowly the mossy gravel between espalier pears still beautiful with the late-hanging bronze and purple leaf.

Having said my say, and said it with a sort of dogged hopelessness, as a man ashamed — not of what he has asked, but

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

of his weakness in having craved a thing impossible — there fell a silence between us.

Slowly we paced, I had nought to urge; the word, whatever it might be, lay with him, who seemed in no haste to utter it. I was spared the tortures of hope, and had known the man and his goodness too long to fear him. As his lips remained closed whilst we twice measured the length of the alley, I spoke again, and in my excuse.

“Sir, ’tis impossible; let us agree on’t, and have done with it. You will not blame me, being a young fellow, and she what she is — God bless her!” I raised my hat. “Even if she hung in the wind, and I cannot say she does — and tho’ our hearts might — might — yet there lies between us what you have mercifully spared her the knowledge of, but what you and I can ne’er forget.”

He turned to me, and his eyes were more than kind. “Nay, George Fanshawe, that has passed. ’Tis true that my poor lad’s end is unknown to his sister — and mother (the one and only secret of my married life) — but in that matter I do not believe that the Almighty condemns thee — neither do I condemn thee. The darkness of that day is long since lightened, and for that blessed light I have measurably to thank thee, my friend.”

My face put the question my lips were unable to shape, such was my surprise.

“Yes, thee; thy words went home. I no longer think so meanly of the All Merciful as to hold Him capable of what the cruellest of His erring children would shrink from inflicting. If I loved poor wayward Samuel — and love him still,” the water sprang to his eyes — “be sure so does He. If I long to restore him — if my thoughts turn to the ring, and the robe, and the feast — if I still yearn to bring him home again, be sure He does, and will. Thou taught me this, George. Our

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

people do not hold this view yet; I cannot give thee Scripture for it: it is the new light, here — ” he laid a hand upon his heart for an instant. “ But it shines clearly, and I am not permitted to doubt what I have seen. Who am I to limit the pardoning love of my Saviour? to set bounds to His power to save — to restore?

“No, George, ’tis not thy sudden deed that parts us, but duty. Thou art at heart a soldier — ”

“But that’s all done with, sir; Sweden was my last hope: I’ve wasted my time there; had my answer, and here you see me.”

He let the avowal pass. It was not the circumstance, but the spirit and the will he regarded; and in this matter of bearing arms mine were as far from his as ever. This I ignored.

“So you will not oppose — refuse to allow me — I mean, I may try again, sir?” Hope was leaping within me like a fountain, had I but known of this last evening she had been mine there and then. The thought of that dead rascal’s blood between us had taken the steel out of my attack; “Lord! there shall be no funkng next time! But I must secure this dear old saint’s leave first,” so much I knew.

“George Fanshawe, if Phoebe will have thee I will not refuse my consent.”

The heart of youth bounded within me; everything was possible, nay easy, nay certain! The face I turned to him blazed: his still wore its form of kindly pity. He knew his daughter. To the side of the matter which would have engrossed the attention of most fathers in such circumstances, the quality and condition of the suitor, the settlements he might offer and the rest on’t, this strange man gave not a thought. Rank he valued at a straw, would willingly have dispensed with in Phoebe’s case. Money as money had no lure for him; and the estates he estimated as a heavy responsibility. It was no prig-

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

gish affectation; this man had the power of seeing things as they are, saw them whilst in life and health as we all come to see them at the last, when on the edge of the grave and knowledge has come too late.

But that "if" of my dear old master, which had seemed at its first utterance an earnest of success, changed complexion most strangely as I went to learn my fate. At once I went, leaving my old friend standing deep in thought, or prayer, in the espalier-walk; hit or miss, I would brook no delay. The dyke had given at last in spite of me; being down, the mischief was done, we could never resume our old relation; the thing cried aloud for an understanding.

But tho' all for putting the question to a definite issue and hearing the best or the worst, I must practice patience; my mistress, who had returned to her father's house that morning, was out; I must await her return.

Pacing thus the dark, low-ceiled parlour hung about with such works of art as the Quakers allow, a print of William Penn a-making of his treaty with the Indians, and sundry black silhouettes in oval frames, a slow footfall announced the approach of Mrs. Ellwood.

We had met earlier in the afternoon; whether she knew of my errand or no I could not divine; her smile and address were as kind and unembarrassed as usual.

"Won't thee be seated, George? I have a weakness for strict equality, thee knows; and how shall we converse on fair terms if I am comfortable in my chair and thee rambling about the room —"

"Like a lost dog?" I suggested, achieving a smile as I obeyed. She beamed upon me motherly as of old.

"Nearer, please, George: I thank thee. Now may I speak? I have heard how this stands from Phoebe."

I bowed: she patted my hand with her thin mittened fingers;

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHTH

"I see nothing to regret in it — so far. It is all natural, and right, and in the Almighty's ordering."

"Then you consent, Mrs. Ellwood — O!"

"Wait, George, do not outrun me, I am an old woman and slow of foot, thee knows; I said *so far*. To have known one another for these years is a good and precious thing for you both. Nothing can spoil the memory of that: it is a part of your lives. To have loved one another — ah! that too is a gift, a very wonderful gift. You are rich indeed if your experiences end here."

But the lady was speaking to a lover.

"Why should the thing stop here? You consent: her father consents: Phoebe loves me: what else have we to consider?"

"The will of God, dear friend." The words were breathed softly: they gave me pause.

"Think; He made you both for His service. His is the first claim. Wouldest thou not have owned it if He had seen fit to take her to Himself? It may be that He has need of her here below and calls upon thee to resign her to Him."

Was ever such a woman? To hear a mother calmly facing the possibility of her daughter's death — her only daughter, mind you, and such a daughter! — stopped my mouth.

The lady had spoken slowly with pauses between. When, as she judged, the words had sunk in, she resumed:

"Thou thinks a woman's duty is to love and to work for a man — some man." It was just what I had thought, that and nought else.

"Such is the Almighty's will for most of us. But there are other paths of service for a woman's feet. Sometimes He calls her to serve not a man, but mankind: to nurse her sister woman, to teach little children, to raise the fallen.

"Hast thou heard of Robert Raikes?"

I had not, and heard now of that Gloucester Quaker who

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

had recently begun the work of gathering into schools the vicious and neglected infancy of that cathedral city.

"My Phoebe," said her mother with gentle pride, "has stayed with Robert Raikes and studied his methods. She is applying them to the children of thy estates, George Fanshawe.

"Hast thou heard of Elizabeth Fry?"

Of that modern saint, even I had heard.

"My Phoebe has seen much of our friend Elizabeth Fry; has been with her in Newgate."

I almost leapt. My cheeks loosened with the shock: my little mistress among the crawling filth, the stench, the foul language and fouler bodies of that den of she-felons!

"Yes, she learnt much there too, and has been instrumental in bettering matters in Chester jail and Lancaster Castle. Her example has stirred up others, thou sees. She was greatly helped; she appealed in person to the justices in Quarter Session, and we think not wholly in vain. The women's side at Lancaster is said to be a changed place."

"Mrs. Ellwood, you amaze me! Has Phoebe done this? How? When —? Is it possible that you knew and allowed it?" I was afraid to trust myself to say all I felt, a pained astonishment, almost amounting to indignation, so possessed me: all this was so utterly at variance with my conception of a woman's round of duty.

"Oh, I could tell thee more. Our Phoebe is a woman of character, George; she has a will, a quiet force and a fund of sound common sense: she is known already: she corresponds with William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, Samuel Romilly and others, friends of the slave and oppressed, who are labouring for those who cannot help themselves, George."

I sat and looked upon my old friend without a word; my ideas of what was fit and permissible for a woman had suddenly

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

become inadequate and out-o'-date. Things, opinions, customs, persons had shifted strangely; changed places, altered in value remarkably in the last few moments.

I was as a seaman returned from a French prison who finds his native land under a new ministry, and his younger brother, let us say, whom he left a schoolboy, grown to be a person of worship and well-considered.

In these minutes my little mistress, sweet, simple, girlish, the gentlest and freshest of God's creatures, the veriest wild rosebud of a girl, had developed incredibly under my eyes.

"This has seemed evidently the path marked out for her, George; she has travelled far, watched closely, thought deeply, prayed earnestly. Now she is putting experience into practice."

The speaker paused; nor was I in haste to urge the pleas which had seemed so unanswerable a minute before. That my mistress had grown ten times better worth the winning in these minutes goes without saying. It was a sense of my own unworthiness that closed my lips.

"And you feel — she feels — that her marrying me would stop all this? Indeed it shall not! I will lay all else aside and help her. Yes, with heart, and soul, and strength I will!"

"So thou intends, dear friend, so thou wouldst attempt; but, before thou runs, make sure that thou art sent. Is this work also thine? Thou hast sought for years to re-enter the army. This desire has engrossed thy thoughts, George?" I nodded assent.

"But that's at an end. Yes, Mrs. Ellwood, as ye know, I have trained myself for a duty I felt — or thought I felt — was laid upon me. I need not tell you, for you know, this evil man strides across the map; spares none. Austria was strong; he has stricken her down. 'They that take the sword,

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

the arena of chance medley. For the Lord's sake, and for the honour of Clan Cruner, approve my commendations, and

"Believe me to remain,

"Ever your most attached, faithful and
assiduous well-wisher, and most obed.
servt.,

"AENEAS GUNN."

Having read this letter through twice I sate staring at the thing, drumming upon the table with perplexed fingers, my brows furrowed with thought.

The ladies perceived that something unusual was upon my mind, and checking their exchange of chat under cover of which I had read, turned to me half-expectant.

"Forgive me," said I, "for an uncouth fellow little used of late to such company as this. Yes, I have something to tell you. See here, it has come at last! Phoebe, this is my commission. I am bidden to join at once."

Her eyes grew large, but she held her peace.

"Come, we are at the parting of the ways. Take me, Phoebe, and I tear this across and am yours for life! 'until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us,' yes, you taught me that!"

It was not to the mother I spoke, but to the daughter. I looked across at her; her eyes met mine steadily; her parted lips alone shewed the distress of her spirit.

She was seated now and took the parchment I passed across the table with a steady hand, glanced at it and laid it down.

Twice did she try to speak, and twice the voice died in her throat. Turning to her mother she looked long, and then laid her head upon the table, her face hidden in her hands. I waited.

"This is very wonderful," she said at length, only a little

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

above a whisper. "It seems the answer I have sought. Dost thou not see, George, the Almighty has spoken, has made the path plain for us both? It is not the path I could have chosen for thee, this dreadful path of darkness and storm, confused noise and garments rolled in blood."

Her face was laid upon her hands again, and when she lifted it the cheeks were wet.

"Am I not right, George? Hast thou not prayed for this all these years?"

I had, as I had learned of her.

"Then who am I — a woman — to tempt thee aside from what seems right to *thee*, from what thou hears God calling thee to? Go! O, go! — Oh, what am I saying? It sounds too cruel! but here, we only hinder one another. Is it not so?"

"This is our Father's ordering, I feel it. There is work waiting for thee out there — somewhere — which only thou canst do. It has always been so with thee, has it not? Strange, obscure preparings for sudden chances, which were no chances at all!

"Thou wilt be as dear to God in a red coat as in a drab one, and as surely His servant.

"Perhaps we do not see all." I knew she spoke of her people.

"And if — and when thy service is accomplished, and mine, and He has spared thee — " her voice shook — "then — then — if it seems right — But meanwhile, George, dear George, go!"

She pushed the parchment across to me, our fingers touched; "Go! O, go, George! do not try me too far. Oh, how can they do it, those women up and down, who are sending their men to the fighting? I have watched and wondered at them, and now it has come to me — to me!"

She arose and came to me around the table and stood holding me by the hands.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

“Mother, may I? We may never meet again in this life!
Farewell, George — farewell my love! May He keep thee!”

For one marvellous moment our lips met, the next she had
fled from my embrace to her mother’s bosom.

I bowed my head and left that room and the house, sent to
the wars by a Quakeress.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

WHOLLY UNIMPORTANT

PHOEBE, as was suitable, remained at The Edge with her parents; I rode over to the lodge and found in Abel's massive incurious silence a balm for my distress of spirit.

To have thrown and lost is little if the stake be reparable, but to have laid the secret hopes of long years, one's heart and life, all I was worth, all I could ever be, upon the table, pledged against a small soft hand, and to have lost: you will admit this was monstrous hard.

My little mistress had fairly outgeneralled me: had arrayed the half of me, possibly the better half, in arms against my suit and worsted me so. Whilst all the while, there she stood, a very woman, three-parts won, nay, all-but mine, and O, so infinitely better worth the winning than I had dreamed!

Lord! to what a stature had she grown! What a climbing spirit was hers!

For once I slept poorly, and had risen betimes in hopes of riding his first round with Abel, but found that early man was already up and off. Pacing the hall bricks before breakfast awaiting his return, that row of antlers along the wall caught my eye. In a moment I had sprung upon a stool and had one down, then another, and was out at the woodshed.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"Play! — play! — boys' play!" I muttered as the hatchet crashed and rose.

"Good morning to thee, George!" It was Abel attracted by the noise. "Whatever are thee doing?"

"Putting away childish things. I am a man at last," said I, regarding the wrecks of half-a-dozen good heads with grim satisfaction.

"Phoebe will miss these," he said; "cannot thee spare her one? This is her favourite, a noble pair of antlers, these." From the heap where I had thrown them awaiting destruction, he lifted the best, a royal, of six-and-twenty points (the "muckle hart o' Kinloch Shin" — a notable old bully in his day, a stag I had lain out three days and nights to kill).

His question put the matter in a new light.

"What, she cares for the thing? I had not thought of that; keep the lot, Abel, faith I'm sorry I smashed any of them. Lucky ye came when ye did; these few won't signify, there's a plenty left. Is it only Scottish heads, or does she value — ?"

"She admires them all. Those elk from Sweden are strangely fine; — yes, I will accept them gladly for her; the house would look commonplace without them."

Feeling like a fool I helped him carry them back whence they came.

He must have divined I was out of sorts, and perhaps set it down to my sudden call to arms, as to which he and I were agreed to differ; and so, minded to help me, as I believe, the good fellow talked more during breakfast than was usual with him, and would have from me the history of the big head, for, said he, "We have none like it in the chase, and I think there can be few up north so heavy now-a-days."

So for Phoebe's sake I told him the story of the best of my Scottish heads, the great warlock hart of Corrie Kinloch, a beast known to the grandfathers of my gillies, one whose

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

spells had turned more than one bullet cast from the "white money."

"There, man," said I summing up, "you have the main of a stupid business, and I wonder at a sober soul like yourself taking pleasure in hearing such stuff; the boyish folly of it—pah!"

"Not so," said he, low and pointed as he was used to speak when he had made up his mind on a thing; "'twas innocent enough according to thy lights at the time (now it might be otherwise); 'twas all in thy day's work as one may say."

"That's so: I am good for no better."

He looked me over with a look I did not understand.

"Thou hast a fine great frame to keep fit, and a fine clear eye and a delicate ear to preserve in use — "

"For what?"

"That is beyond me; but I can remember a day down south when thy hand and eye were accepted — they may be again.

"This call for thee is no accident, George; since I heard of it my mind has run on the strangest of fancies." He rose and paced the room with hands behind him and eyes upon the floor: "Do thee know I find it in me to envy thee? There must be a wild streak in my composition, for since last night this life of mine seems poor and small, George; too easy and certain and secure, somehow.

"I shall think of thee — and wish myself with thee at times, which will be wrong, for I know by this what my right place is, and why I was put into it — and yet — "

He smiled upon me tremulously and some moisture dimmed his eye, then with a manifest effort he resumed: "It seemed to me last night as if something weighed upon thy spirits, perhaps I am mistaken, but — but if I could help thee in any way — " (putting aside with the gentlest gesture my unspoken dissent);

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"just to carry thy burden — thee have a burden, I think. Well — well! God have thee in His keeping, George, *my friend!*"

That I declare was his parting word, for he was ten miles away approving the plans for a great dam when I left the place, nor did it occur to him (or to me) to talk business, or to refer to the new canal, or to the pits, and the trolleys that he had planned to run on iron rails from the pits to the fly-boats on the canal, a scheme that presently added some thousands yearly to my income.

We knew one another's minds, you see, up to a point; beyond lay territories unexplored and inaccessible to either.

What my trouble was he had never guessed.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER FORTY

I ENCOUNTER A KNIGHT-ERRANT

NOW that I come to think of it, I rode away from Winteringhame somewhat too leaden-hearted for a young soldier off to the wars by his own choice.

The charm had vanished from the country-side; that mile-long avenue of oaks which an ancestor of my mother's had planted as the memorial of a visit of some sovereign (Elizabeth, surely, for the Maiden Queen would seem to have spent half of her time on progress), these wide-limbed trees, I say, that had welcomed my home-coming two days earlier, now dript their melting rime over me as I rode beneath them at my going.

The weather had changed without me and within.

It cost me not a sigh to leave a place which I had never lived upon for more than a few months at a time, and which still after years of ownership seemed less mine than Abel's. My proprietorship, always shadowy, had seldom appeared to me less real than on that day. Truly I think I would have surrendered those nine manors in fee simple to any man who could have guaranteed me fifty acres and Phoebe, just the girl as she stood, and one — any one — of my half-timbered farm-houses for a nest for her. The sickness had come upon me, I longed for a home, quiet and small, and pictured myself and her, Darby and

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Joan, with an uneven, quarried floor beneath our feet, and bowed black beams close over our heads as we faced one another across the oaken supper-board.

I saw the back-log upon the hearth, the kettle on its chain, and here was I riding away from it all to die in a ditch.

What curse was on me that I alone of men must sit muzzled at the feast of life? No Jack upon my lands but might win his Jill and enjoy her, whilst I, the fellow they all envied, belike, their nominal lord, went hungry and lay cold.

This, you will perceive, was the reaction consequent upon a great resolve. We are made so, or I am. There's a flaw in us. The moment of supreme tension, when our hearts, wire-drawn and resonant, respond to angel touches (to the finger of the very God Himself, I'd say if I dared), passes: some peg gives, a string slackens, and all is flat again.

My horse's hooves that had often beaten fine tunes for me had no music that day. Neither march nor chorus would stay with me, only there fluttered in the back of my head as I rode a faint persistent whimpering as of someone whom I knew in grief. When I listened it was still, so I took myself to task for a faint-hearted fool and stayed myself upon the memory of that heroical mistress of mine, how she had stood, how spoken, how looked at our final word.

A journey begun in this frame should have been a sad business and left me with only melancholy memories, but, thanks to the heart of youth and the chances of the road, I found myself upborne after the first stage or so, and presently saw that life was a thing tolerable, hopeful even, and by the second day, diverting.

To begin with, my lady loved me. A simple matter this, you will say, and not outside the course of nature, but to me then (and still) a thing astonishing, wonderful to the last degree. My bosom swelled at the thought; was I too, even I,

CHAPTER FORTY

writ among the band ennobled by ladies' love? I pondered the singularity of it. I believe I sung as I rode. Later, posting across Yorkshire, I found myself smiling upon all whom I met like a young king newly come into his kingdom. The future, I could face it now; I rode at it as one rides at a big, black fence when the pack has changed from scent to view, and strains silently upon a sinking fox. I could see the end of this run. I was certain to pull through; was she not waiting for me? She had said as much.

Lord, what a thing it is to see one's duty plain! Mine was to get to my regiment as soon as might be, to get aboard-ship; in short, to let the same brig that brought me from Sweden take me back again.

But Hull failed me. Gloom hung over its narrow High Street as palpably as a sea fog; gloom, and mutual distrust, and the twinge of recent loss, and fear of more to follow.

Merchants and their captains conferred at corners with the longest of faces. Bad news had come that day of the Baltic convoy, nine of its richest bottoms made prize by the Dunkerque privateers off Cley; three sunk and many missing. Two old-established houses had stopped at once; others would be compelled to follow suit; men watched one another furtively, wondering whose shutters would go up next, for half the street was hard hit and all were disheartened.

It was evidently a black day for Hull; but whatever might be the loss, enough for my purpose remained; there lay the "Sarah Petchell" where I had left her, riding to her buoy out in the swift yellow tide-water: what of her next voyage?

Her owners' counting-room was upon the first floor of Wilberforce House. The name of the firm was on the door: Syme, Janning and Bayne. The seniors were out, but Mr. Bayne would see me.

I was shewn into an inner office and found the merchant,

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

whom I knew by sight, pacing the floor impatiently, talking to himself, and taking snuff.

"It will not pay, and what's more 'tis wrong. No, 'twill be another loss!" he muttered with his back to me, unconscious of my entering; then, turning on his heel and finding me in the room, said with a preoccupied air, shading his eye for a better view of me: "Ah, Mr. Brayshaw — Langshaw — *Fanshawe!* I am glad to see thee; thy packages will be forwarded by first boat to Goole . . . But, 'twas not this that brought thee here, eh? Pray be seated. (Folly, folly!) What then can we do for thee? (Throwing good money after bad — and wrong too!)"

I stated my errand. He spread his palms with the action of a man who disclaims responsibility, and said I had come at an unfortunate juncture, that no ship was sailing from the port for the Baltic: I had doubtless heard the news? He waddled twice across the room and took snuff again, after offering me a pinch.

"And what grieves me more, and touches me closely," he went on, "is a resolution that my partners (who are not Friends) have arrived at this very day. They are bent upon reprisals. They insist upon fitting out the brig as a letter-of-marque (a miserable mistake!). I am opposed to it on principle; I am overruled, as thou sees. It is not only unscriptural, as I tell them, but injudicious. (A foolish business, very!) Yon is no privateer!" he jerked his thumb towards the brig, visible from the window. "Her scantling is too slight: she is not fast enough. Our tonnage-dues have ruined our model: look at her bluff entrance — see! A French prize, a schooner or brigantine, would be more suitable — they can lie close and beat! She — except upon a wind, where is she? Thee, who has sailed in her, must agree with me: she has not the legs for the job. (I tell them so, but they won't hear me, they are all

CHAPTER FORTY

for getting our own back; and there's nothing about that in the Sermon on the Mount, as I said to them an hour since.) She is a tub, a mere tub! I counsel keeping her for the coastwise trade until things quiet down, but they are all for carronades! — wicked folly! Carronades, thee knows, are things of the past; if they had spoken of long eighteens amidships! But what am I saying? It is all wrong together, sinful and distressing, and we shall make another total loss."

The good man whose perplexity engaged my sympathy, potted up and down the room oblivious of my presence, washing each hand with its fellow as if endeavouring to remove the guilt he foresaw must adhere to them in consequence of his firm's decision.

"Riga? ah, yes. I was forgetting. Thee will get nothing from here or north of here. I hardly know what to advise. Try Boston on thy way south; I will give thee a letter to our agent there. London, of course, will be thy best chance."

He wrote shakily and with some deletions, and so far forgot himself as to offer me his hand as he gave me the letter. I took it, and heard him as I left the room resume his interrupted soliloquy, "Carronades and chain-shot 'for crippling the rigging.' Oh, the fools! may the Almighty forgive me!"

The horse-boat set me over at New Holland upon the Lincolnshire coast, whence I posted south to Sleaford without other misadventure than a broken spring which detained me half a day at some nameless smithy on the wolds.

The best inn in the place was full and overfull, for a cocking-match was set for the morning, upon which, as I was assured, a pot of money was depending, sportsmen having journeyed from as far afield as Lincoln to back their fancies.

The company, though well satisfied with themselves, were hardly to my liking; they struck me as *raffish*, and growing noisier with the coming on of the wine and the appearance

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

of the cards set me thinking of bed. Twice was I invited to make up a quartette by older men who plainly regarded themselves as in some way entitled to exact compliance with their wishes. I felt myself out of my place, no private sitting-room was to be had, so I called for my candle.

The racket before day-break, the bawling for boots and hot water, the rumble of voices below and the rattle of departing chaises let me know that my fellow guests were away to an early appointment. I descended later to an empty house and, as it seemed, to a solitary breakfast.

Whilst discussing my rasher and coffee, a drink that was then displacing the breakfast ale to which I was bred, a very young gentleman of the pretty-boy species, who seemed to have slept ill, sauntered into the room blinking and yawning. He glanced around him, the stained and disordered table-linen surprised him, the vacant hat-rail drew out his lower lip. Approaching me with a well-bred bow he asked permission to sit at my table, and, thanking me in agreeable tones for my compliance, fell to drumming with his fingers as if at a loss and trying to recollect himself.

"Your pardon, sir, but — this will be Sleaford — ?" I reassured him upon this point, but, albeit he again thanked me with the politest of phrases, my words seemed hardly to reach him. I regarded him with compassion for his youth's sake, and could guess very well how he felt. He had the air of a smirched cherub.

"Waitah!" said he presently, addressing himself to a fatherly person who was relaying a table near, "is Captain Rook in the house?"

"Gone this two hours, sir."

"Damn! Or the person they called the 'Count'?"

The waiter knew no one by that title. The youth swore again with added emphasis and relapsed into silence. I shot a

CHAPTER FORTY

glance at him over the rim of my cup and thought his lip twitched.

Would he be pleased to order? The fatherly man stood expectant; but it seemed that the culinary resources of the house failed to allure. A sole? Not he: had they red mullet? They had none. Nor a pair of sweetbreads? These could doubtless be obtained, but in the meantime would he say kidneys? He would say nothing so common. My rashers caught his eye, he nodded, "Well done, thin, waitah, mind — and a hot plate." He relapsed into a brooding silence.

I divined something wrong, divined even what the trouble might be, but, pitying the lad from my heart (for he seemed extraordinary young to be cast upon this tavern life), held my peace, and thought of my own mistakes at York and elsewhere.

I would see this play out; my own business might wait an hour: I called for fresh coffee.

The lad's breakfast lay at his elbow untouched whilst he spread and pressed flat upon the cloth before him several pound notes, upon which he pored incredulously, as it seemed to me, for his mouth fell open as he looked.

"Damme, I must have a head on me this morning!" he exclaimed at last, "for the devil is in these notes — or in my eyes! Sir, pardon me, but what d'ye make of that?" I examined the bill he handed across the table for my inspection.

"'Tis no note, this, my dear sir — *Bank of Engraving!* where on earth did ye get this passed upon ye? What — are they all 'Sham-Abram?' You have been bit, indeed!"

"Faith, ye may say so: that lot were bites and — and I am a ninny."

He sat back in his chair regarding me across the table with eyes in which his past folly and present predicament were assuming their due features and proper proportions. As the position became clear to him he grew the less able to face it

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

out, and the man returning with my tray found my companion with elbows upon the table and head held between his hands.

Some movement of mine aroused him; he glanced up, and finding my eye upon him and perhaps some pity or good-will in it, his own filled. He flushed painfully, he was just a boy, as I thought. "Last night — mixed my wine," he began, and stopped, confounded by the manifest uselessness of regrets. "Sir!" he broke out, leaning towards me, "You are a gentleman, I am sure of it!" I believe I bowed. "Yes, I am convinced of it," he ran on breathlessly. "In a word, I am in the hell of a scrape, cleaned out, and — and — that's not the worst of it. The fact is I am a Government servant on the business of my office, and have no right to be here at all. I must be getting on, I must post to Boston, but owing to this damnable chouse, I am left without a guinea to settle my bill, let alone for my posting!"

One can usually tell by the ring of it whether the tongue is telling the truth; I had never a doubt of him, and replied at once.

"I am for Boston, too, as it happens, and if you are travelling light, as I do, you shall share my chaise. I fear it means that or nothing, for our *convives* have stripped the stables; I am told the only horses in Sleaford are those I bespoke for myself last night."

He jumped from his seat with delight, but sank back with a groan, thrusting a hand into an empty fob.

"For your bill, permit me to settle it; I have been in scrapes in my time. What say you to starting in an hour? Waiter, both on one, and if you have it in the house, a couple of bottles of that new Dublin soda-water, and hot rashers to follow . . . Now, sir, your head is better already, set to work upon your breakfast!"

Our chaise rattled round, we were off. The air revived the

CHAPTER FORTY

lad. He chattered and laughed as the wheels trundled and the patched white stern of the boy bumped the saddle in front of us. A more mercurial and light-hearted temperament I have seldom met. He was all for telling me the story and object of his journey whether I would or no; a confused, rambling tale, intelligible probably to himself, possibly to one, like himself, in a Government office, but Greek to me.

"You see, 'tis properly not our affair at all, for old Sir Moberly, of 'the War,' is at the bottom of it, we believe, or rather that old harriidan of his, Lady Betty, who pulls his wires and makes him dance.

"We in the 'Foreign' got wind of it first from our man at Stockholm, and, strictly speaking, 'twas no business of ours to pull chestnuts out of the fire for Whitehall, but, for once in a way, my chief happened to be on speaking terms with Moberly and did him a good turn. Twig?"

I saw nothing save the fag-end of one of those squabbles and reconciliations which form the inner life of all public services, and wondered vaguely who was to be sacrificed as the peace offering.

The boy ran on: "You must know that our fellow in Sweden feels he has slightly committed himself — can't very well revoke — so tips us the wink, and now 'tis we that step in. The man is to be stopt, and, to oblige old Moberly (for, honestly, we don't think the game worth the candle), we are for stopping him."

"Stopping whom, did you say?" I asked with no motive beyond keeping the narrator to his point.

"Why, this man to be sure; an ancient enemy of Lady Betty's, as they say. It is said he grassed a son's of hers by her first husband, a bad lot, no doubt; but a man, and especially a woman, must stand by her family. Anyhow, the thing is placed in my hands, and here you see me, my hunting-leave

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

stopped (a bit of a bore that), posting over half England to hand a despatch to a man I have never set eyes on, and who will call me out, as sure as death, when he sets eyes upon me."

"As bad as that?"

"Not a doubt of it, and that is where the fun comes in. We of Downing Street have our reputation to sustain, you see. The 'Ad.' and the Horse Guards think themselves dashed fine fellows, and call us 'Non-combatants.' It is pure accident — merest ill-luck, that none of us juniors has been out. We can't help it, can we, if no one has seen fit to call us out? I am sure you agree with me, but it is a sore point with us, if I may say so. Here's my chance; I jump at it; I am sure of a run for my money. This fellow is the hell of a fellow, six feet six in his stockings — a smiter, I can tell you, and, apart from his pistol, a perfect devil with horse-whip, or whatever comes handiest. So, when that little fool, Apethorpe, who had the first call, looked shy at it, 'Give it to me,' says I, and bay George, they did. Aha! the 'Admiralty' and the 'Blues' won't score over this!"

"But what has this ruffian done?"

"God knows," he replied unconcernedly; "he is a radical,¹ which is enough for us. Well, as I was saying, I knew what I was in for, and have the barkers in my valise. O, I have practised my *rôle*. 'No fisticuffs, sir, if you please,' I shall say; 'put down your mauleys, and name your friend like a gentleman!' I shall keep a table between us, and have my card handy. Twig?"

The lad's laugh was delicious; his absurd delight in anticipating his first affair was too ridiculous for censure. I would help him later as way opened.

¹Mr. Fanshawe informed me that the term "radical" has within his own recollection altered its signification more than any word in the language. Between the years 1790-1828 it was used as a term of reproach, implying active disloyalty tinged further with immorality, infidelity, and disregard for the rights of property. In some country places it seems still used as an insult. — Exon.

CHAPTER FORTY

"You seem pretty confident, then, that he means fighting?"

"Cocksure. He has been out before. O, all the fellows at the 'War' know him by repute. A perfect demon, my dear sir; the black sheep of a darkish-woolled family! Old Moberly, to please the King, or to please Lady Betty, has kept him out of the services until now (tho' the fellow has interest), but we learned, as I said, from little Standish" (the lad tossed eminent names about in a manner that tickled me mightily) "that our man was leaving for the Continent, shipping under foreign colours, you see. We checkmated him, as far as Sweden is concerned, but the pith of the thing is (as we learn from 'Old Mo'), that it wasn't the Northern Powers at all, but Boney himself that our friend was to serve under. We couldn't stand that, you know. I take it the shipping is watched. That is not my affair. I am to warn him off privately (to avoid scandal and questions in the House), and — personally — take the consequences. Twig?"

"And you are to find your man in Boston? D'ye know the place? Have ye friends there?"

"Devil a man, my dear sir! which reminds me that I shall want at least one: why —" he turned to me as we sat close-packed and looked me over with mute approval. "I say now, would you act for me? You've been monstrous good to me already, but that sort of thing, as you know, always leads to more of the sort — and, now that I think of it, I haven't given you my card. Musters is my name, Adolphus Musters, of the Dorset branch; the governor sits for Gatton, ye know. Hi! isn't that a kite? we see but a few of them near London."

The boy's mind was as mobile as his eye and flashed back and forth at the challenge of each new sight and impression. The day was fair and mild; we rode with the glasses down chatting of this and that, recurring at intervals to his quest, how it would affect his standing in his office, the accepted

MEMOIRS OR A PERSON OF QUALITY

canons for giving and receiving fire, the rules as to distances, division of light and other matters, in which I was abundantly diverted to find this ferocious young fire-eater deeply versed and prepared with opinions upon vexed questions that might have puzzled the *doyen* of a military club.

"The fellow is a Jacobin, not a doubt of it," he remarked apropos of nothing, but I knew of whom he spoke. From some official scruple, or possibly by mere accident, he still withheld the name of his quarry. "They say he is a shocking bad landlord: estates vilely mismanaged; a nest of papists and dissenters. I hate a dissenter, don't you?"

I laughed; he rattled on with the glorious irresponsibility of youth. Did I agree or demur mattered nothing so that I listened and let him talk. Nor did I weary of his chatter, for I saw he was in touch with events.

"The Ministry?" he cried derisively. I had dropped the word, he caught and tost it back to me. "Now, I'll be sworn ye think the King's cabinet governs this country, eh? You have their names at your finger's ends? — Figureheads, my dear sir, and like a figurehead just the most useless part of the ship. *We* lay the course, *we* steer — *We*? — the permanent staff, of course, men whom ye never heard of — the half-dozen chief clerks who govern England! (My chief, for one.)

"Govern it? yes — not as absolutely as Melville and Braxfield do in Scotland, I grant ye; they and their Court of Session are making short work of the radicals up north. Why, a man in the 'Home' told me for a fact —" He lifted a trap-door, I peeped into a dungeon,¹ an oubliette, inhaled the reek of the place — he was off again.

¹About this time persons of liberal opinions in Scotland were being sentenced to transportation for fourteen years for the crime of constructive treason, which a partisan judge had defined as "seeking a legal end by illegal methods." The evidence upon which these unfortunates were found guilty by packed juries was such as an English panel at that time would have refused to listen to, being largely composed of

CHAPTER FORTY

"We are, in a manner of speaking, omniscient; nothing escapes us. That is our business — what we are there for — to know what is going on. A huge machine, you'll be saying, wheels, wheels! but there are wheels within wheels, too.

"This blackguard that I am running down at such pains, imagines — if he imagines anything — that someone high up, exalted personage, say, royalty possibly, conceives a distaste to him. It may be so, but one of us sowed the seed and keeps it watered, and the rest, as is proper, lend a finger as occasion serves. Freemasonry, ye say? Rule of the service, sir; must pull together, or where the dickens would the nation go to?

"By the by, I owe ye — have I your name?" (resetting his stock as lordly as a young prince). "Stop, boy, stay!" he bawled, forestalling my answer; a fox was crossing the road ahead of us. "Pull up! Ha! here they come; I swear they come; let me out of this!"

In a moment there was not a pin to choose between us in the matter of boyishness; we sprang from opposite doors and raced for the point of crossing.

"Curse it! help us up!" he bleated, shaky from overnight cups, his feet slipping upon the mossy rail. I caught him under the arms — he was light of bone — and swung him to the top of a post and held him erect. "A-yah!" he yelped puppy-fashion, breathless with surprise and as fluttered as a girl at my usage. "Thanks — O, eh, but I see them! Say, shall not we give 'em a holloa? *O-ver! gone o-ver!!* They have it! no need to lift 'em! Can ye hear 'em? — Music! music!"

A score of heavy-timbered hounds came lumbering over a

extracts from the works of Tom Paine, supplemented by speeches delivered by persons other than those upon their trial. It was a stupid tyranny. Respectable youths arrested by the Edinburgh city watch for a little rough horse-play after dark in the Cowgate would be packed off to sea on a man-of-war before morning without trial, or notice to their parents, at the sole order of the City Clerk. —ED.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

stale furrow, running a breast-high scent, a furlong ahead of their huntsman, whose heart was with his season's entry left behind in the gorse. *Twang — Twang — Twang!* he blew as he galloped, his lew ear cocked for an answering whimper between the blasts.

The half pack topped the rails by threes and by fives, dropped into the turnpike, flashed over it with a patter of feet and quick breathing, forced the blackthorn opposite, and were away, tolling and yowling across a clover-layer, shouldering one another off the line for the lead.

Up came the solitary rider, his purple cheeks shaking with their efforts. "How — how — ?" he cackled breathlessly, taking his horn from this lips and steadying his horse for the jump.

"Two minutes bare, a clean dog-fox?" rapped my companion, giving in brief all the information the rider needed.

A resolute nod, a brilliant grin, the wide mouth opened. "Thankye kindly, gen'lemen, for not a-fouling of my line. O-ver!" The wise old beast rose at the timber, went in and out of the road like a trick horse at a fair, and the moment his hooves touched the grass extended himself valiantly to get upon terms with the racing pack.

"Pretty! oh, pretty!" sighed the boy, availing himself of my hand to descend. "That fellow has slipped his field, and no mistake; there is not another soul within sight. And to think that this infernal radical is losing me a week and a half of *this!* Lord, how that running has made my heart go! Can ye hear it? pit-a-pat! I am as soft as butter; 'tis the late hours — and play — and the other thing. I will take less, I swear I will! But I say — you didn't strain yourself, I hope, chucking me up there like a doll? Jove! you're a giant of a fellow! Wish to goodness — "

We had regained the opposite doors of our chaise, the lad

CHAPTER FORTY

still chattering gleefully; I had my hands upon the straps in act to get in, when, "Stay," says he, "what was't ye were telling me when I cut in with my view halloo?"

"My name, was it? Yes, I think — well, here you have it."

We were facing one another across the empty chaise, each at an open door. He leaned across, took the card I tendered, glanced at it, his mouth fell open, his eyes widened, he sprang back with every mark of discomposure.

"Hey — hey — hey! — *what?*" he stammered. "Oh, but I say now, this not the game — most damnably unfair, I protest. To worm my orders, my instructions out of me — " he passed from panic to anger, standing braced with a kindling eye.

"What ails the man?" I said, seeing him pant and whiten, and thinking him gone suddenly demented.

"No, sir, no — keep your own side!" he exclaimed apprehensively, seeing me coming to his help around the back of the chaise. By the time I had reached the spot where he had stood (moving deliberately, amazed, but nowise vexed), he had darted into the chaise and out again on t'other side.

The postboy turned in his saddle, and watched with the broadest of grins the singular evolutions of his fares.

"My dear sir — Mr. Musters," said I, in what were intended to be soothing accents, suitable to his supposed complaint, but he waved me off, forbidding me to strike him, and offering satisfaction.

"Get in, man," I replied, "and let us on to Boston."

"I'll be hanged if I get in; but, if ye will swear to keep your fists off me, I'll unpack my weapons and fight ye here where we stand."

"Fight? Who talks of fighting?" The idea was preposterous. I would as soon have thought of pistolling a chorister

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

of the Chapel Royal. "Heart alive! What should you and I fall out about, let alone fight?"

"Right y'are, mister," chimed in the postboy, who went on to beseech us to continue our journey before his horses should take cold. But Mr. Musters was still unpropitiated; keeping his distance, he began unbuttoning his Petersham and presently found and tossed to me a letter.

"Will ye do me the favour to read that, Mr. George Augustus Fanshawe?"

"Why, yes, that is my name," said I, still mystified and slightly nettled, in spite of my amusement, by this cavalier treatment. "What's this?" I added, letting the cover lie where it had fallen.

"Read it, sir, read it!" he replied, still edging away. "And don't think for a moment that I'm avoiding ye, but I am a light-weight, a feather-weight, you are six or seven stones the better man, you top me by near a foot, don't now, I beg, disgrace yourself by taking a brutal advantage. I—I—I am anxious—I am desirous to give ye sat—sat—satisfaction; I swear I am—lookye, I'll fight ye across this very road, I will indeed!"

"He has run mad!" said I in desperation to the postboy, who assented, with a rider as to the jim-jams. "If we could let him blood, now, it might save his reason," I said, speaking to myself. The boy nodded, and dismounting stiffly, produced a fleam from the boot.

"Us tääkes um wi' us for 'mergencies, staggers and sooch," said he, keeping the instrument behind him as he sidled up to his patient; "Easy, ma läad! Soa — soa! (Stand tha handy to set on his head whan I fells him.)" This was to me in a stage whisper, audible at twenty paces, but a lunatic, no more than a horse, is expected to understand surgical technicalities.

Mr. Adolphus Musters, with an enemy on either flank, a tall

CHAPTER FORTY

fence behind him, and the chaise in front, sounded a parley.

"Fellow! keep off! Sir — Mr. Fanshawe on your soul and life you will repent this to your dying day."

"Woa! woa! then. Steady does it! Who waants ta hurt tha? Lord, if I had but a twitch to clap on's nosel! Doan't lat him pass tha, now!"

For the patient had thrown himself upon me as the lesser peril.

"Sir, I put it to ye, is it decent to play horse with a special messenger from your King's Foreign Office? Colour this how ye may, the tale won't pass; decline to fight if you think fit; set this stable-boy to maltreat me if ye will, but the matter shall nor end here; and, observe, I leave ye no excuse, I have done my part; see, ye are served, this boy is my witness!"

He darted to where the fallen letter lay, snatched it from the road and fairly thrust it, seal and superscription uppermost, into my hands.

Again his tone rang true; his manner, and a certain dignity born of duty performed under difficulty, impressed me. This was not the act of a zany. The letter itself thus forced upon my notice bore him out. My name faced me upon the cover; I stood more amazed than ever.

"How came ye by this, Mr. Musters?" I enquired, turning the thing in my hand back and front.

"Be so good as to read it, sir. Yes, it is for you," he verified the address by my card, and to my thinking rose an inch. "Read — yes, my part is done, and now" — he wavered slightly — "I am at your service when and where ye like."

Scarce listening, I broke the seal. It was an intimation from his Majesty's Minister for Foreign Affairs that my Swedish commission had been cancelled, and that in view of this circumstance the passport granted to me before my previous visit to Stockholm had been annulled. In short, I was apprised

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

that I should do well to make no further effort to leave the country, and that persistence in so doing would lay me open to the gravest misconception.

I forget the precise terms: this was the gist of a communication (semi-official, I fancy they call it), which even I, unversed in the methods of Downing Street, could not misconstrue; an embargo veiled under the form of advice.

I was helpless, and tho' ill-used, luckier than I knew at the time. The consideration of which I was imperfectly conscious, and which at the moment galled me unspeakably, was altogether exceptional. Sir Moberly, if that were his name (I had never heard of him), had gone out of his way to gild the pill he prescribed. A poorer man than I, one without my parliamentary interest, would have been arrested out of hand. The baronet undoubtedly credited me with occult powers and sinister designs, my surrender of my patronage to Abel being an action incomprehensible to the sordid borough-mongers of the party in power. Yes, I was fortunate in exciting a certain amount of fear, but for which I had without doubt been left to rot in Holloway until released by death, or by the lapsing of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.¹

This was a facer. My scheme of things went down and lay where it fell; there was no coming up to time after such a knock-out blow as this. I must needs put up with it: no feasible alternative presenting itself to me at the moment.

I would go back home again and think it over. In the meantime I stood there in the empty, long Lincolnshire turn-pike while a man might count three score slowly, watched by my companions.

The consciousness of their presence and curious scrutiny

¹A suspension which had hung like a blight over England for years past, a sort of gloomy inter-lunar cave through which the liberties of our country passed between the promise of freedom under Pitt and its fulfilment under Russell.—EXORS.

CHAPTER FORTY

at last aroused me to the need of decision. My eye had roved from the boy to little Mr. Musters, impartially unconscious of seeing either. The boy stood my gaze unconcernedly enough, the other shifted a foot uneasily, apprehensively; the movement recalled me to what was due to others; I spoke.

"Sir, this letter (for which I have to thank you), changes all my plans. But it need not — in fact it must not inconvenience you. We have misunderstood one another, how I do not know; better let that rest — "

"Then you mean to say you won't — you don't —?"

"Fight? Ah yes, you were talking — well, sir, you may take it that I won't and I don't — except for something I can understand; and frankly there's nothing between us. Did I say a word? — offensive? I doubt it. I am trying to remember. No. Come, jump in then: we will resume our journey. Put that thing away, boy!"

I held the door. Mr. Musters re-entered in silent amaze. I followed; the boy bestowed his fleam in the boot, remounted and shook up his cattle for a start.

At the first turn of the wheels my companion leant forward, "Hold, where are we going? Wrong way, — stop him!" cried he.

"Why so," said I, regarding him sidelong with anxiety, "I cannot leave you by the wayside, Mr. Musters; you are for Boston, I understand."

"But not now, sir," said he.

"But you have that fellow to overtake of whom ye were speaking — "

"Sir, that is done. Is it possible? Don't ye see? You — you are the fellow — I mean the man — I would say the gentleman."

As he uttered these words he again grew so exceedingly red, and exhibited such renewed signs of mental perturbation that my fears for his reason returned upon me.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

I am certainly dense, as it is called; even among the Scots I was held to be slow in the uptake, as that people phrase it. Yet I have always maintained that upon this occasion I gave no exhibition of dulness. Why should I, unconscious of wrong done or intended, conceive myself to be a proper object of suspicion to my King and his ministers? "But the circumstances," you say. They did not fit, I reply. "You should have recognized," do I hear you urge? Who? Myself? Men have bowed to their own reflections in a mirror (Mr. Pitt did to his in the tall pier-glass in the alcove of the parlour at Clarges Street; it was called Pitt's glass ever after). No, no! my young friend, you are mighty perspicacious — after the event!

"Indeed, sir, you are the gentleman," repeated Mr. Musters.

"Then, sir, all I can say is, ye have stopped the wrong man. I do not answer to the description. The person as ye described him a minute back was, let me see — a black sheep of low family," — he groaned — "a devil of a fellow, a Jacobin, a shocking landlord, a radical, and I know not what else. Well, sir, I really am —"

"On your way to take up a cavalry commission in the Swedish army!"

"That is so, though how ye know it beats me. I have breathed no word to you or any man of my plans; the seal was intact —"

"Sir, the suggestion is insulting."

"The innuendo, for it amounted to no more, was a thoughtless one; I was thinking aloud, Mr. Musters; pardon me. Where were we?"

"Sir, before I speak I will beg you to control yourself; I accept responsibility for all I said, although as you now know, I was unaware of your identity. I know every word of that letter — how else? I wrote it — under orders, of course — it originated from my office. You are the man whom I was de-tailed to stop. And now —"

CHAPTER FORTY

The absurdity of the situation overcame me, broke upon me all in a moment; I shouted with laughter, roared, and would have rolled if the straitness of our quarters had permitted. Peal after peal shook me, I laughed as I had not laughed for years, and only stayed when weak and helpless with merriment. Even then as fresh phases in the misunderstanding recurred to me I renewed my guffaws.

"A smiter! — Oh — !"

"I can only repeat my offer of — "

"Black wool, ha! ha!"

"At the first possible moment, Mr. Fanshawe, I am at — "

"A ruffian, ho! ho!"

"Indeed, that was your own word, but — "

"There are plenty without it! O, but my sides ache! And ye say that ye had never a suspicion?"

"On my honour, not the faintest; how should I? Remember, sir, I had only your description, having never met you in person."

"Whilst I, though fairly well acquainted with my person, had never seen the description. What a portrait! Ho! ho! Who drew the thing, may I ask? I am no judge of art, Mr. Musters, but this strikes me as a trifle highly coloured; somewhat in the style of Gilray, is it not? or might it not be a Rowlandson, now? Soberly, who furnished these particulars? Not this Sir Moberly, for I never heard of the man. His *wife*! Is he married, then? To whom?"

I was now to learn in how small an orbit affairs revolve. It appeared that the Lady Betty, of whom I had heard my companion prating half an hour previously with small interest, since how should the spite or prejudice of some woman of whom I knew nothing affect me? This woman, I say, was by her first marriage a Ganthony, and the mother of the ex-cavalry man whose fall from grace, trial and sentence had been town talk some years earlier.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

Here was a family skeleton of the heart-breaking sort.

Now I doubt not that your experience of skeletons jumps with my own; when it is possible to keep the thing in the cupboard its existence is denied; but when from its size or activity the spectre is visible and can't be ignored 'tis usual to dress the poor thing up in the finest of clothes and invent some tarradiddle, not wholly incredible, to account for its origin and deplorable lack of comeliness.

By Mr. Musters' account the legend current with the friends of poor Lady Betty seemed to be that the peccant lieutenant had been more sinned against than sinning, ruined first at York and later in Town by a certain epitome of all the vices, a dicer, a duellist, a ruffianly brute of enormous wealth and ruthless cruelty — myself in short, just me.

What I owe to the vindictiveness of this poor lady will only appear on that Day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Without doubt her wounded spirit had sought solace in pursuing me, in crossing my aspirations and blighting my career, a retribution made possible by her husband's official position.

I turned these surprising news over in my mind as we rode (my companion well content to find me in so harmless a humour and seeing a proximate ending to our alarming contiguity if I but remained long enough in my brown study to reach Boston).

Poor woman! I frankly forgave her. The thought of what my own mother must have suffered during my months of disgrace and absence recurred and pained me.

How a woman longs for a man child, in what pain she bears him, with what anxieties she nurses and trains him while little, and when grown, the selfish fellow too often stabs her gentle bosom with his ingratiitudes, or puts her to the blush with his follies!

CHAPTER FORTY

These reflections held me silent for some miles. Once I startled my fellow-traveller with a question, "But tell me, sir, how got ye my route? — From a merchant in Hull?" Again I relapsed.

The mighty tower of the church that they call Boston Stump had been, or had seemed, so near at the time of our re-starting that it had struck me as policy to continue our journey as far as the town, there to bait our horses and to refresh ourselves before returning to Sleaford.

A parliamentary election was in view, the place hideous with discordant blues and yellows, but what I best remember is that the nominations were being made from a hustings set up within the nave of the church itself, an arrangement which saved the burgesses the expense of a town hall and put to some visible use an enormous building; but in odd taste, surely.

We left to the boy the choice of a hostel; (it was the *Peacock and Royal*). At the door of the room Mr. Musters hung back. "Pardon me, Mr. Fanshawe, but if this means more of your hospitality, I — really, you know — an affair of this sort must be conducted according to rule, mustn't it, now? I appeal to you, sir. Here I may be said to be on neutral territory, whilst once inside that door —"

"At least, Mr. Musters," said I — seeing there was nothing for it but an explanation, and thinking it best to meet this punctilious young gentleman with punctilios — "at any rate, sir, we cannot discuss an affair of honour in a tavern passage. A private apartment is a necessity; here is one; your entering commits you to nothing."

He bowed, and, after a moment's hesitation, preceded me hat in hand, but declined to sit. His boyish face betrayed perplexity, vexation, but not apprehension for his personal safety, and I did not fail to observe, with an inward smile, that he no longer thought it needful to have the table between us.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

"And now, my dear sir," I began, "let us attempt to arrive at a creditable understanding. Here we find ourselves, two gentlemen of family, who have been so unfortunate as to have mutually given one another cause for resentment. The situation is unusual, for neither of us has a friend — if I understand you — within a couple of days' posting."

"And as principals, Mr. Fanshawe, we cannot possibly confer, can we? It is most irregular!" interjected my antagonist.

I. "Not to be thought of, my dear sir; but — a moment, if you please," for he had moved towards the door deliberately and with something of regret as it seemed to me. "As *principals*, no; but as *seconds*, eh? you take me? I, for example, am already empowered to act for ye," he started, considered and assented with a nod. "Well, Mr. Musters, what better compliment can I pay ye than to request your good offices upon my behalf? So, that's arranged, we each act as friend for the other; now we may speak freely."

He brightened at my suggestion, we drew in chairs, and calling for a bottle of claret, prepared to unravel the knot if it took a day and a night.

He broke silence as soon as the drawer had closed the door, "I really think —"

I. "By your leave, sir, for whom are ye speaking, or rather in what person? Since our capacities are somewhat mixed, had we not better conduct our conference in the third person? refer to our principals by name, eh?"

He. "I take ye; well then —"

I. "One moment — the question is, who shall speak first. We might claim precedence on the score of having been first instructed, but we waive the privilege. What say ye to borrowing the practice of a court martial, where I am told the junior has first say?"

CHAPTER FORTY

He. "That is we, *us*, I mean, for I am lots younger —"

I. "Speaking as second, Mr. Musters, you are, but your man, Mr. Fanshawe, is twenty-seven or so, and I — we, represent the younger principal."

He. "But surely ye will grant it to me — *us*, I mean, as the insulted party?"

I bowed, detecting a flaw and conceding the point.

He. "Well then, sir, I am to tell you that I — you — we —" he nodded, checking himself off upon his fingers, to maintain clarity of head, "demand satisfaction to myself, that is *you*, of course, for some most damnably scandalous expressions."

I. "Used in good faith, I think?"

He. "Undoubtedly."

I. "And under a misapprehension?"

He. "Certainly."

I. "And since regretted and withdrawn — practically?"

He. "Er — yes, nevertheless —"

I. "And condoned, practically, by your principal?"

He. "Um — y — yes, but —"

I. "Well, we have agreed on the facts, and that's a good thing, for it would be wearisome to have to refer back to our principals.

"Now, upon the facts I submit, sir, that in the absence of fresh offence (which ye don't allege, ye know), your man has no good quarrel; and I go further, I decline — decline absolutely to allow my man to meet him."

He. "Oh, I say now, Mr. Fanshawe —"

I. "Hush! my dear sir, we must stick to our characters —"

He. "But I thought —"

I. "Well, then, a word in your ear; a principal (that is yourself) is bound by the decision of his second (that's me), and I say, your second says, d'ye hear? that upon this ground ye can't and shan't fight."

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

He considered the point with pursed lip; its cogency appealed to him. "We must play the game," said he with a sigh. "And now, sir, 'tis your turn; I am all attention and may as well say at once that we are ready to give you full satisfaction."

I. "Not so fast, sir, we have made no demand upon you as yet: why should we? *we* are not the insulted party."

I bowed to him across the board as I spoke with all the gravity I was master of; our eyes met: a medley of expressions contended for precedence in the pleasant young face, surprise, chagrin, temper, amusement; the last won, a smile flickered, broadened, broke into the ringing laughter of boyhood. By a common impulse our hands met and were held.

"Well, I'm — " cried he, expressing an opinion about himself which I did not, and do not share, and which was mighty premature, to say the least on't.

"And now what shall we do?" asked he with all the air of a man that has lost the last coach.

"Do?" I echoed. "Why, man, as we cannot fight, let us feed. Feast if you will, Mr. Musters, for I think ye breakfasted ill, and I, at any rate, am sharp-set." I drew down the bell-cord sharply. "What d'ye say to red mullets?" he coloured, smiling, "with sweetbreads to follow" — he laughed outright; "and whatever they have in the house for a roast, with a couple of bottles of comet port? Did ye hear that, waiter?"

If I thought to have done with his passion for pistols I was mistaken: with the walnuts he was at me again.

"The fact is, Fanshawe, you are too good. I feel myself in a false position. I am not squeamish as to small debts as a rule, I assure ye. But this is another matter; it isn't the amount, nor your delicacy in — "

"My dear Musters, I don't follow you. Kindly pass the crackers — thanks!"

"No, Fanshawe, I am going to have my say. Well, I am

CHAPTER FORTY

convinced that you would really like to have a shot at some one over this business, but out of the mistaken kindness of your heart you bar me. Now, I swear I don't want to be barred. Quite the other way. You do me no kindness in putting me off. You have no conception what a roasting I am in for when I shew myself at Downing Street!"

"Preposterous! Seems to me ye hit my line off cleverly at Hull, and stuck to it well, and ran into me rather prettily for so young an entry. What does your chief expect?"

"Oh, 'tis not my chief I am funkng, but all the office knows I am travelling armed. They will naturally expect — I say, now, we couldn't, could we? You wouldn't care, I suppose? merely to oblige, don't ye know, to — to — to —"

"Pick a little gentle quarrel with you? You blood-thirsty young salamander! No, I fear I cannot oblige ye. Think, now, how it would look. Here we sit, cheek by jowl, twin turtles on a bough not more amicable. Have we not posted together, dined it, wined it? I couldn't really, for, despite your Lady Betty, I have still some rags of reputation to lose."

"Dash it all! perhaps I shouldn't have asked it. Yet 'tis too provoking; I'd give anything! I say, Fanshawe, I may rely on your judgement, I take it? You've had your shot before now, they said; you know what a gentleman may and may not do, I mean."

"I have acted in both capacities before to-day."

"Begad, ye havel!" the lad's eyes burned with the foolish hero-worship of boyhood.

"I will not advise you wrong, Mr. Musters. I appeal to your own good heart. Whatever you did I should fire in the air, whilst if ye winged me — shot your host — think!"

He did think, and sighed anew.

For myself, I never felt less like sighing. My scheme of life had been re-arranging itself these two hours past. I, so to speak,

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

saw my line, and was marking my places — was impatient to be having a smack at them.

This boy's comical face of disappointment tickled me. "You are, by no fault of yours, a day behind the fair, Mr. Musters. Had ye caught me ten days ago there's no saying what folly I might not have been capable of! Posting up to Westminster, perhaps, to pull the noses of Sir Moberly and your chief, since one cannot very well call a lady out. But things have taken a turn with me. Look at me. Do I strike ye as a desperately disappointed fellow?"

I was striding up and down the room awaiting our chaise, rosy with hopes and as happy as a school-boy off for the holidays.

For twopence I would have told this little fellow my good luck.

MEMOIRS OF A

PERSON OF QUALITY

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

JUST A WOMAN

THIS journey of mine, begun, as I have said, with a heart attuned to the movements of a funeral march, had very soon bid good-bye to minor chords and muted trumpets. The time had quickened daily; all the way from Humber-side to Sleaford my post-horses had rapped the roads to some old regimental quickstep; it was reels and *contredanses* since, faster and sprightlier; the Highland pipes skirled in my head as I had heard them on autumn nights beside the fire of pine-roots, whilst kilted gillies and barefoot lasses spun upon the floor.

Now that I set my face northward again no tune could keep pace with my spirits save a wild air without an English name, to which my Irish were used to jig when at their merriest.

And behold a wonder! My return journey witnessed the reverse of the exhilarating buoyancy which I have described; the nearer I drew to where I longed to be the more did I fear my fate. My spirits fell, my mind clouded, I found myself every day more peevish, lonely, irritable and impatient to face what I dreaded and be done with it.

The loss of my commission and final ruin¹ of my military

¹As I thought at the time; the Future with its Grief, its astonishing Experiences and long Evening-Tide of Mercies being mercifully hid. — G. F.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

hopes had little or nothing to do with this state of mind ; in some way, how I cannot say, I had come to an understanding with myself as to that, and regarded myself as absolved from further efforts to reach the front. I had offered my sword not once nor twice, it had been declined; I was even willing to recognize the finger of Providence in this interposition, perhaps (for I am mighty like the rest of mankind), because this embargo fell so patly with my hopes in another direction.

Yet just because of this stoppage, its singular timeliness, and all that it meant to me, and all that I saw hinged upon it, I found myself less hopeful of winning my mistress than I had been whilst years of separation and danger seemed to lie between my hope and its fruition.

I had not earned her. That God should place in my hands this marvellous gift simply as a gift, and not as a reward, seemed to me a thing unnatural. It seems so now. I am no theologian and cannot explain farther the workings of my mind; leave it at this — that works would win me heaven I did not think, but that works might win me a wife I did; and finding myself denied scope and yet thrown back into the neighbourhood of my lady, I feared it would be only to learn finally that she was not for me.

This idea grew almost to the verge of conviction. Stage by stage the traveller got more sober, dowie (as Gunn would have said), and anxious. The time was changed in truth — not scherzo, nor allegro, only andante; and by when I had crossed the hills and was jolting down westward into my own county I was so well persuaded of my lady's perfections and my own exceeding unworthiness as to have near lost hope altogether of winning her.

That this view of the Almighty's attitude towards His creatures was unsound must be obvious to you all: we daily enjoy what we did not earn and do not deserve.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

That my frame was unreasonable from the purely human standpoint, goes without saying. Consider our parting. Such despairs were as little warranted by the circumstance as were the buoyant confidences which had shortened the miles for me along this very road nine days before.

Be that as it may, a lover is not a reasonable being, as all the world knows, save the lovers; and upon the night I reached my place I was as poor a figure of the jolly sweetheart hastening to his mistress's arms as ye could have found had ye hunted England over.

Laugh at me if you will (I myself have laughed at myself), but, having enjoyed the comedy, pause awhile and think. I swear I do not grudge you a moment's honest merriment so there be no scorn in your grin.

But, put it to your own heart, my friend — ('tis to a man I am speaking) — are you, are we, are the best of us, tried by any test or standard, worthy of the wives we win? What? you are silent! And now, perchance, you will pardon a fellow of five-and-twenty for being of the same judgement as is the average man of fifty, when some smooth-cheeks of a freebooter, flying the lover's red ensign, lays him aboard and demands — his daughter! Think of the outrageousness of the request; consider its calm effrontery; the aggressor has not a tittle of claim, no shadow of legality; he's just a common marauder. If he had asked for his victim's purse, for his watch and seals, had he clapt pistol to his man's head until with quaking hand he had signed some bond or engagement, now, there had presently been a Bow Street runner on his tracks; but since it is merely a daughter, the light of the man's home, the apple of his eye, the law will take no cognizance of the affair, and ten to one the pirate, *hostis gentium* though he be, gets off clear with his prize, amidst some huzzahing from the rest of the fleet.

What's this, I ask, but marriage by capture. At bottom

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

we are savages still. (And long may we so remain: Amen!)

Another tedious digression? Truly I grow incorrigible, but keep your hearts up; 'twill soon be over.

The dreariest journey draws to its end at last, and I, frowning in the darkness of my chaise, with a face, as I guess, more like a thief's on his way to Tyburn than an honest man's upon his own acres, reached the tall stone posts at the beginning of the avenue.

The wind had chopped round to the south, the day's frost was going out of the ground in fog; so thick was it that the horses twice left the road, so that I alighted and led the beasts, for the boy was strange to the place, and at the last, in pity for his fears, I paid and released him, lest he should fail to find his way back; for beneath the oaks, which still retained much leaf, it was darker than many a midnight.

Thus, carrying my valise, and feeling my way from post to wall, and from wall to door, I stood at length unannounced and unexpected under the porch of the lodge.

The front of the house shewed no light at any of its windows. I listened; no sound of life pierced the wet blanket of fog save the quick drip from the tree and the muffled rattle of head-stall chains from the stables where Abel's nags would be cleaning up their night's baits before lying down.

I lifted the latch — (upon my lands there has never been need for those bolts and chains and window-bars with which men upon neighbouring estates have sought to fortify themselves from the despair of their starving labourers) — the entry was almost dark; a rush-wick swimming in grease gave a certain scent and an uncertain light. Still no sound reached me from behind the three closed doors I could see. I set down my burden and stood listening, feeling half foolish.

Then, without sound of warning, a door opened at the end of the passage and from the dark room beyond my little mis-

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

tress slipped out into that flickering dimness and stood. The floating wick flared for a moment, the light fell upon us both, deepening the lower shadows and leaving the floor in mystery.

At the sight of me she stood, the latch beneath her thumb as if to secure her retreat; indeed, her shoulders rose and her other hand lifted the skirts from her feet as if for flight.

My throat contracted; would she refuse to meet me? Had she no word for me? All the misgivings of my lonely journey crowded upon me, tied my limbs and checked my tongue.

Thus we stood for perhaps a breath (which seemed long). I thought her eyes dimmer and her cheek paler, her hair too, seemed in some disorder — had she been crying? A choking wave of pitying love rose in me.

Then she moved; thrusting her little face towards me, still holding by the latch, she bent upon me such a look, such a strange, yearning regard, wonder, love and fear.

Her lips parted, the sounds travelled the space between us soft as a sigh, mere syllabled thought not meant for a warm live human ear.

"So soon! — not killed, then; — *drowned* — as I feared — and I sent him to it — O, how I prayed for this, and now it comes I am so afraid!"

As she ceased she released the latch and came faltering towards me into the light with little half-reluctant steps, her face convulsed, her wide eyes shining in the flicker. There were tears still wet upon her cheeks.

And now it was I who should have spoken. I have said so since a hundred times and blamed (or blessed) my unreadiness. The passage is of no length; in six steps she was close, her face working, her sweet young body shaken with its alarms; there was just the least pause, my hands and lips moved (she says), and "*It is alive!*" she cried, low and hurried; "*George!*" and ran into my arms.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

There she hung, wetted by the fog-drops which clung to every hair of my frize coat and gave me in that half-light the seeming of a corpse risen from the waters; the wet fell from my cap-peak and brows upon her upturned face. What cared she? Her warm mouth pressed hard to mine in long, breathless, silent kisses. Our very souls met in that embrace.

"Oh, thou art come back to me alive — alive! Art thou alive, truly?" My pressure reassured her. Again our lips met.

"Ah," she whispered, "this is more than I deserve; far more! I thought myself so strong; I sent thee away, but that night I broke down. I was like a wild thing; I seemed mad to myself and to mother, and next morning I rode over to bid thee stay." She hid her face; I felt her quiver. "Only mother knew," she whispered, "Oh, how I rode! That poor horse! And after all I was too late — thou wast gone.

"Then news came of the Hull ships; it seemed as though I had killed thee. I prayed — oh, how I prayed! I was on my knees just now in there. But what a thing I am! no faith! I had given thee up, made sure thou wast dead — drowned. I was praying that any way I might know what had happened; that thou might be permitted to come — to appear. And now! Is it not wonderful? Is it not true where it says, 'He is greater than our hearts?' He does not use us after our deservings; He grants more than we dare ask. Thou art here, alive!"

She poured her story in quick hot whispers between silences and kisses. Never was such a surrender: its completeness unmanned me, filling me with humility. For the second time in so few years I had entered a house a beggar to find a fortune awaiting me, and this was the richer.

Poor little heart, what had it suffered! News of the capture of the Humber convoy had reached this west country grange two days before, misdated, and with each circumstance of horror aggravated. All were reported lost, sunk, stranded or

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

taken. That I had sailed with it had seemed certain even to the caution of Abel. I had not written.

The wars were dread times for women. They sat at home and saw the ship sail, the regiment march, and waited, waited for the word which too often never came.

Like a heath fire that roars here and dies down to break afresh elsewhere, smouldering on, eating into new ground, undefeated, ever at its mischief, so was the time. The tale of slaughter never quite ceased; on battle days the earth or sea opened wide lips and gulped their thousands; between whiles the list grew and grew, not in the Royal services only, but upon every coast and on every sea ships were sunk, burnt, taken, cast away. Ships sailed away into the lonely sea spaces and were never reported.

Remember the "Lutine." A king's frigate, the crack ship of her class, with a picked crew upon special service, with bullion for her lading, a round million sterling in Pillar dollars and gold doubloons, headed up in their little oaken kegs, a king's ransom. She cleared from Gravesend at sunset on a Saturday night, dropping down with the ebb (two Winteringhame lads were in her company). Where is she now? Forty years have gone by and not a stave of her has come ashore on any coast of the world.¹

The thought of these things pressed upon gentle spirits, upon women's spirits, with the weight of some personal grief; and when to the general bereavement was added the pang of sudden loss, near and close and terrible, do you wonder that a brain was crazed at times? From this I verily think my return saved my little mistress.

How long we had stood thus I do not know, for at crises of

¹ Recently there have been some barrels of specie (Pillar dollars) recovered from the sands of the Texel, which have been attributed to this ill-fated ship, and handed over to the heirs of her underwriters. ~ ED.

MEMOIRS OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

one's life one loses count of minutes. All I knew, or cared to know, was that we, she and I, had entered into a new world which seemed as near to heaven as might be.

What a moment! What was this that it had effected, this amazing change? We were the same, yet not the same. For myself, I stood as I had been standing since my entering that dim-lit, narrow passage; not a foot had I lifted, not a word had I uttered. She, my little mistress, on her part, had opened a door, taken six steps, or less, and whispered a dozen words.

Around us the faint noises of the house creaked and rustled on; the slow clacking of the jack in the kitchen chimney, tones of voices in this room and in that, lowered to the needs of friends sitting cozily and close and muted by shut doors. Within, all was ordered household peace; and without, the dumb thickness of a world in its winter's sleep; and in the centre of it all were two hearts strained close and beating each to the other, insensible to the flight of time, the past clean sponged off the board, the future as though no future could ever be; a breathless, throbbing present of unutterable bliss.

I was still a young man, and for all my experiences, younger in mind than my years, and ignorant to a degree of human nature. What a child is I had half forgotten; a boy I knew; a man,—one man, myself to wit,—I partly understood; but of women of all ages I was most particularly ignorant, and of the heart of a maid where a man is concerned I had not a glimmer.

What was this? I began to tremble, to shake, yet not with cold. I had not suspected myself of such scope for passion: it was foreign to my experience (thank God for that!) Nor had I dreamed of such capacity in a woman—in my little mistress.

United at last! and so suddenly, so utterly. How shall I put it? As a child I had watched two raindrops slipping down the

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

pane more and more slowly, with little devious sidestarts and meanderings, nearing, diverging, each going its own way whilst coyly conscious of the other's presence. A gust of wind and they touch, and in the act are lost, another being is gained, a double life, larger and fuller, speeds straight and strong to its goal.

The rising latch of the parlour door awaked me from my dream. I heard her mother's voice call Phoebe, and upon the word her face filled the opening. She took it all in at a glance, and turned as she stood with warning finger to stay her husband and Abel, who seemed close behind her.

The men saw and hovered doubtfully, struck with the surprise of what they beheld; Abel, at least, wholly unprepared.

The mother's light, quick whisper barely reached my ear: "Let them alone, the dears! — In with thee, husband; don't speak! they will never be so happy again!"

THE END

the ground was falling, and by morning the ice
had been broken, and the water was running.

and the water was running, and the water was running,
and the water was running, and the water was running.

and the water was running, and the water was running,
and the water was running, and the water was running.

and the water was running, and the water was running,
and the water was running, and the water was running.

THE END











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